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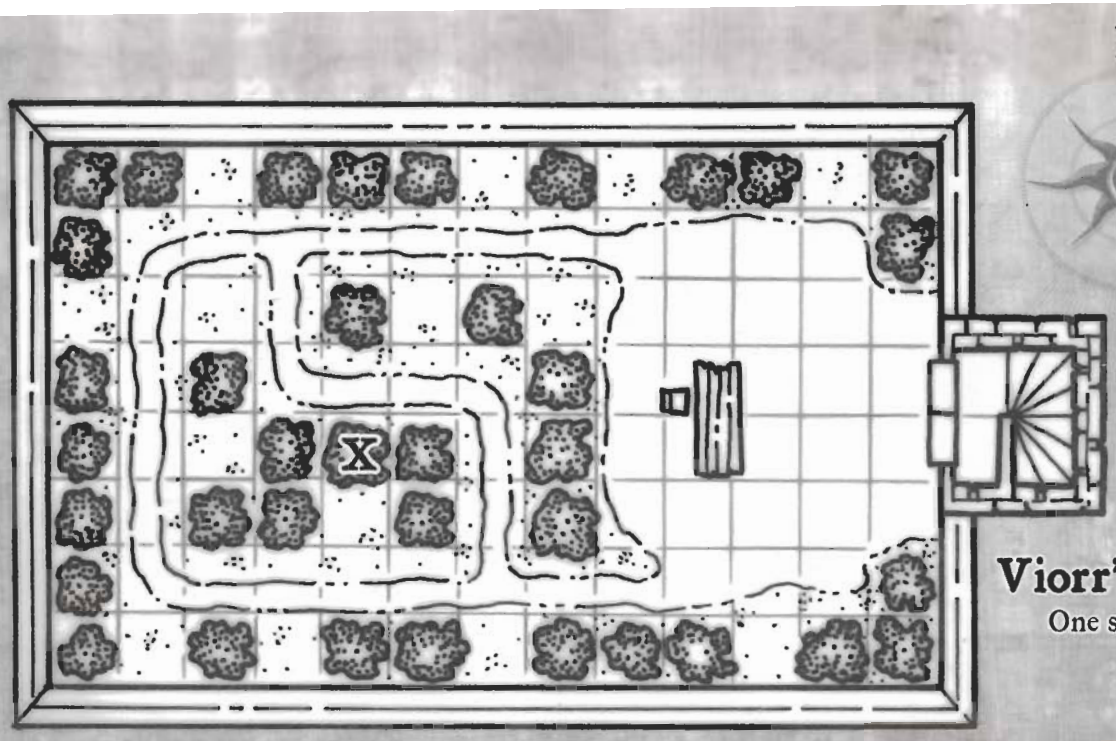
Dungeons & Dragons

ADVENTURE

EBERRON

WHISPERS OF THE VAMPIRE'S BLADE

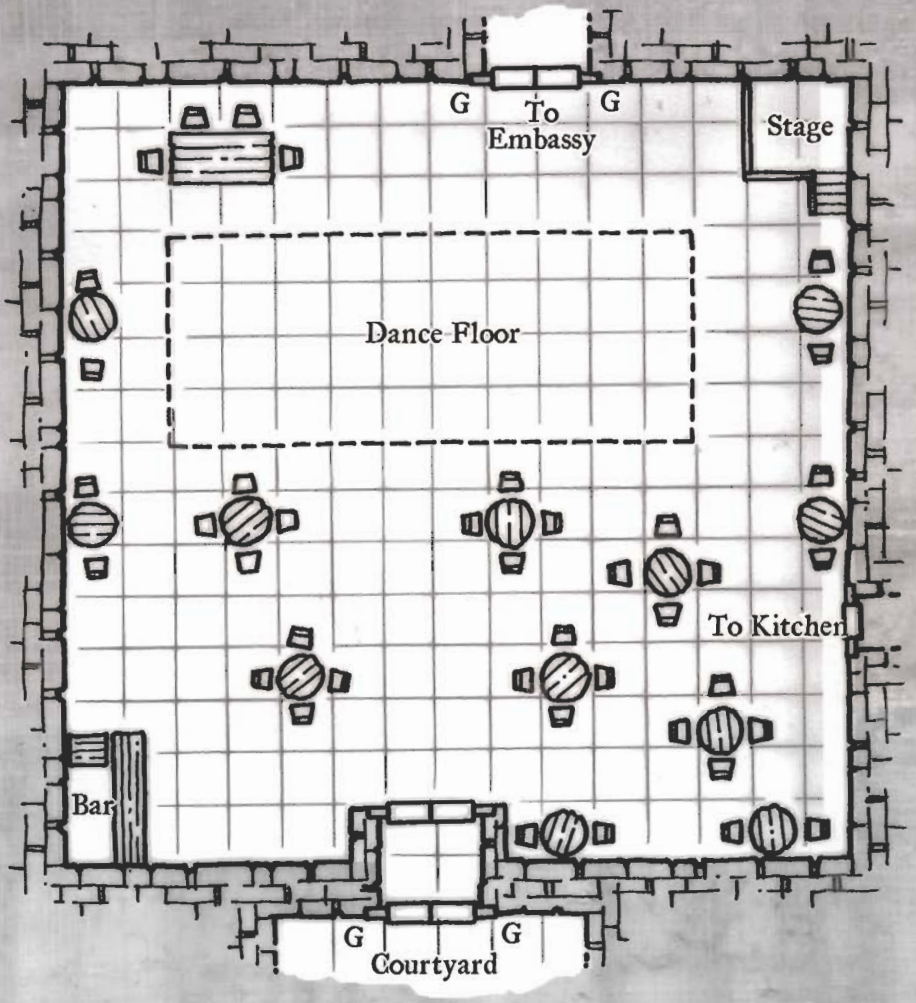
DAVID NOONAN



Viorr's Greenhouse

One square equals 5 feet

X=Dire ape



Aundairian Embassy

One square equals 5 feet

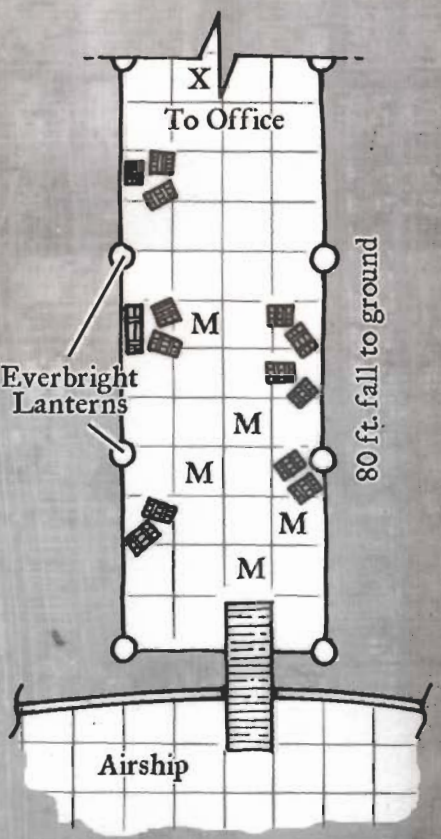
G=Guard

Docking Berth 3

One square equals 5 feet

X=PCs start here

M= Lucan's minions



EBERRON™

WHISPERS OF THE VAMPIRE'S BLADE™

A 4th-Level Adventure

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Introduction

This adventure sends a party of four 4th-level characters on a mission filled with danger and intrigue. When a Brelish spy defects and takes a potent magic item with him, a race ensues to recover both before the fragile balance of power in postwar Khorvaire tips in the wrong direction. With minor adjustments to encounters, this adventure can handle groups of adventurers smaller or larger than four as well.

To get the most out of this adventure, you need copies of the following D&D books: *Player's Handbook, Dungeon Master's Guide, Monster Manual,* and the *Eberron Campaign Setting.* If the characters have already gone through *Shadows of the Last War* (the first adventure in a three-part series), this adventure continues that story line.

Adventure Background

The end of the Last War hasn't brought an end to the rivalry between the nations of Khorvaire. Every nation spies on its neighbors, and some say the Last War never really ended—only the method of conflict changed. Now the nations compete through cloak-and-dagger escapades instead of outright battle.

Far beneath the towers of Sharn lies a crypt with a resident who, though dead, still wields influence in the City of Towers. Calderus is an ancient psionic vampire of fell power who rules a network of enslaved vampires and dominated pawns. This network serves as the eyes, ears, and hands of Calderus; she rarely leaves her hidden crypt. A month ago, an enterprising agent of the Citadel of Breland named Lucan Stellos discovered Calderus's spy network and traced it back to its source. That was Lucan's last mistake as a human—Calderus easily defeated the interloper and turned him into a vampire.

After interrogating Lucan, Calderus sent her new minion on his first mission. She ordered him to steal a mysterious magic sword from one of the Citadel's vaults. Lucan succeeded, slaying several guards in the process, but once again found himself in over his head. The *soul blade* Lucan stole had an intelligence and will of its own, and it quickly conquered Lucan's will. The *soul blade* intends to return to the place it was forged—the nation of Karrnath. Neither the *soul blade* nor Lucan has any qualms about leaving a trail of bodies in their wake as the two of them make their way to the distant nation.

Before Lucan became a vampire, he was respected and well known in the spy trade. Lucan was skilled at bringing enemies of King Boranel to justice and thwarting the plots of Breland's rivals. His sudden departure—and the violence that ensued—didn't go unnoticed, and spy networks across Khorvaire wonder whether Lucan has gone insane, has betrayed his king and country, or has instigated a new game of death and deceit whose rules haven't yet become clear.

Rumors about Lucan abound, however. Most of the covert and intelligence groups working in central Khorvaire believe that Lucan left the Citadel of his own accord, and some have heard whispers that he took an item of great power with him when he departed. Now those other groups want to get their hands on Lucan—both for the item he supposedly possesses and for the wealth of knowledge he has accumulated over the years.

The King's Dark Lanterns, the intelligence branch of the Citadel that Lucan worked for, examined the bodies and interviewed the witnesses that Lucan left at the vault. For this reason, they know something that none of the other factions do—that Lucan appears to be more than human. They have no idea how he came to this state, the nature of this state, or what plans drive him, however, and this disturbs them.

Deep in the bowels of Sharn, Calderus is likewise perplexed. It shouldn't be possible for Lucan to flee from Sharn instead of bringing the *soul blade* to Calderus, since the bond between vampire master and vampire spawn requires total obedience. But Lucan has somehow disregarded this bond, and the vampire lord's fury simmers.

Adventure Synopsis

The adventure begins in Sharn, the City of Towers. Viorr Maelak, a captain in the King's Dark Lanterns, hires the characters to apprehend Lucan Stellos, an agent serving under Viorr's command who has apparently gone rogue. Catching Lucan poses three complications. First, Viorr doesn't know whether Lucan has fellow traitors within the ranks of the Dark Lanterns. Second, Lucan absconded with one of the Citadel's most powerful magic weapons, a longsword known as the *soul blade.* Third, based on the trail of bodies Lucan left behind as he fled, it's evident that Lucan is no longer merely human.

Shadows of the Last War

This adventure follows the events in *Shadows of the Last War* and is intended to serve as the next part in a longer epic. However, it can be played on its own without any reference to the events that took place in either *The Forgotten Forge* (presented in the *Eberron Campaign Setting*) or *Shadows of the Last War.*

Over the course of the two earlier adventures, the PCs helped Lady Elaydren d'Cannith recover two schemas and the creation pattern they belong to after braving ancient ruins deep below Sharn and defeating agents of the Lord of Blades and the Order of the Emerald Claw. Both of these groups continue to play a role in the events that unfold over the course of this adventure.

The search for Lucan begins in the gnome city of Trolanport, where the PCs seek Lucan's associates in hopes of uncovering his trail. At a high-society masquerade ball, the adventurers pick up Lucan's trail while drawing the attention of rival groups also searching for the rogue agent.

The PCs pursue Lucan as he flees Trolanport aboard an elemental-powered airship. Along the way, raiders hired by the Order of the Emerald Claw attack, causing the airship to crash near Sterngate. At the fortress, Lucan catches a lightning rail coach. After a running battle aboard the fast-moving coach, Lucan flees into the Thrane wilderness to make his final stand in a ziggurat that dates back to the Dhakaani Empire.

Running an Event-Based Adventure

This adventure is event-based. It consists of a number of encounters that move the plot—the PCs' pursuit of Lucan—forward. You control the pacing of the adventure, and you have the freedom to move encounters forward and back in the sequence we've provided.

For example, the adventure includes a high-society ball in the city of Trolanport. As written, that ball takes place the first night after the PCs arrive in the city. But if the PCs stagger into Trolanport with grievous wounds and clearly need rest before they resume adventuring, you can have the ball occur three days after the PCs arrive.

In an event-based adventure, you have the freedom to adjust encounters to satisfy the style of the players in your game. For example, if your players enjoy investigations and talking with NPCs, stretch out the scene where the PCs attempt to discover where to find Lucan's associate in Trolanport, making them work for the information that moves the plot forward. If your players prefer combat, have the sahuagin offer the information the PCs seek while begging for their lives after the PCs defeat them.

Set Pieces and Cliffhangers

Whispers of the Vampire's Blade has four set pieces—big, memorable encounters that should feel like the best scenes from an action movie. Specifically, the masquerade ball, the battle with the sky raiders, the battle on the lightning rail coach, and the final confrontation with Lucan deserve more of your attention because they're the encounters your players will be talking about long after the adventure ends. Make sure these encounters get a significant part of your preparation time, and your effort won't be wasted.

The set-piece encounters may take an hour or more each to run, so think carefully about timing in the real world as you run the adventure. You have two options: plan your gaming sessions so that each set piece occurs early in the session, or find a suitably tense moment in the middle of the encounter, and then create a cliffhanger by saying, "See you next week."

For example, you could end a session with the PCs taking off aboard the airship bound for Karrnath; you'll have plenty of time to run the sky raiders encounter when the game resumes. Or you could start the sky raiders encounter, then end the session at the moment the two airships collide, causing their elemental rings to flicker and sending them plummeting toward the ground. Your players will have all week to agonize over their characters' predicament and think of ways to pull their airship out of its dive.

Also consider that D&D characters need periodic breaks to rest, heal, and prepare spells. The set-piece encounters expend as many PC resources as three or four normal encounters, so it's best if the PCs are near full strength when a set-piece encounter begins. Furthermore, it's a good idea to give the PCs an opportunity to rest after a set-piece encounter ends.

A Guy Kicks In the Door . . .

To paraphrase author Raymond Chandler, whenever the action lags, have a guy kick in the door and start a fight. In this adventure, that guy is almost always someone else pursuing Lucan and the *soul blade*. Set up a confrontation for the PCs using an NPC from the following list. Choose from the list or roll randomly.

Who Kicks in the Door?

d%	NPC	Affiliation
01–20	Garrow	Blood of Vol/Emerald Claw
21–35	Areyndee	House Thuranni's Shadow Network
36–45	Lahorak	The Monster's Eye (Droaam)
46–55	Kuralaa	House Tharashk bounty hunter
56–75	Urosh	Minion of Calderus
76–85	Jaralie	Church of the Silver Flame
86–100	Kasha	Karrnath's Covert Ministry

Garrow, Cleric of the Blood of Vol: hp 32; see Appendix. Hunting the PCs to find the schemas and searching for Lucan.

Areyndee, Shadow Network Agent: hp 25; see Appendix. Wants to determine Lucan's secrets for House Thuranni.

Lahorak: Greater barghest; hp 67; *Monster Manual* page 23. Wants to determine Lucan's secrets for the Daughters of Sora Kell that rule Droaam.

Kuralaa: 5th-level half-orc barbarian; hp 43; *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 112. Hired by Aundair's Royal Eyes to capture Lucan.

Urosh: Mummy; hp 55; *Monster Manual* page 190. Seeks Lucan at the behest of the vampire lord Calderus.

Jaralie: 5th-level human cleric; hp 36; *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 114. Investigating Blood of Vol interest in the party or Lucan; Jaralie might aid a good-aligned party.

Kasha: Weretiger; hp 50; *Monster Manual* page 174. Wants to determine Lucan's secrets for her lords in Karrnath's intelligence organization.

If the PCs are stuck because they lack information or because they don't understand the relevance of the facts they do have, sending a guy to kick in the door is a good way to give a hint while still making the PCs work for it.

Part One: Job Offer

This adventure begins in Sharn. If you ran *Shadows of the Last War*, it starts a few days after the PCs have returned to the city. Lady Elaydren thanks the adventurers for accompanying her and disappears into the shadows of the metropolis. If this is where you are starting the story, don't worry about any references to past events.

Part One of the adventure consists of the following events:

- The adventurers receive a mysterious invitation that promises monetary rewards and a job for those who deal in swords and spells.
- To get the job, the PCs must capture a dire ape that's loose in a tower garden.
- If the PCs capture the monster and pass the test, Captain Viorr Maelak of the King's Dark Lanterns explains the situation surrounding the rogue agent Lucan and offers the PCs the job of pursuing Lucan as agents of the King of Breland.

These Coins Have Many Friends

The adventure begins at one of Sharn's taverns or wherever the PCs relax between adventures. The encounter is written from this perspective. If they have a headquarters or particular place they frequent, adapt this encounter to take place there. Read or paraphrase the following:

It's another rainy day in Sharn, but the warmth of the fireplace and your companions' good cheer keeps the outside gloom at bay. You're relaxing with a late breakfast when a cloaked figure wearing the blue-and-silver livery of House Orien approaches your table. "Message for you, kind sirs," the courier announces as he drops a wax-sealed envelope on the table. Then he stands there, looking at you expectantly.

The House Orien courier doesn't know who sent the message or what it says, only that he received it this morning from his superior at the house enclave in Sharn. He stands around in the hope that the PCs will tip him, although he's too polite to ask directly. He remains beside the table until he gets a tip or the PCs send him on his way.

The envelope contains a letter and a number of platinum pieces equal to the number of PCs. Adjust the number in the description accordingly. When the PCs open the envelope, read:

The envelope contains two sheets of paper. Four platinum coins are attached to the first sheet with red wax. On the second sheet, a few sentences have been scribbled in a cramped style.

"These coins have many friends who would like to meet you. Come to the northeast stairs of Myriad Tower, upper city, at noon. Bring travel gear and those you trust. Also bring your sense of urgency and knack for discretion. Give this parchment to the guard near the stairs, and he will let you ascend."

The note is signed with a cryptic "V" beside the black silhouette of a stylized lantern.

Development: Noon is only an hour and a half away. Depending on where the PCs are in Sharn, they probably don't have time for much beyond a quick trip to their domiciles to pick up any adventuring equipment (although they could do some shopping along the way if they know what they want).

The Iron Gate

Myriad Tower, a nondescript structure in a nondescript part of Sharn, rises into the stormy sky. The PCs reach the place without incident. The northeast stairs are blocked by a heavy iron gate that is locked tight. There is no obvious guard in sight.

The Situation: A locked iron gate blocks the stone stairs the PCs need to climb. The lock is of amazing quality (DC 40 Open Lock check), and the gate is strong and sturdy (hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 28). The easiest way to get past the gate is to follow the letter's instructions: "Give this parchment to the guard near the stairs." The guard's location isn't readily apparent, however; because this location is the secret headquarters of a secret organization, he isn't just stationed at the stairs for anyone to see—instead, he hides in plain sight nearby, posing as a beggar.

Spot Check: With a successful DC 15 Spot check, the PCs notice a figure sitting in an alcove within sight of the iron gate.

The Beggar in the Alcove: If the PCs approach the figure, they see what appears to be a beggar in tattered rags. He seems to barely notice them, but he holds out a clay bowl when they get close.

This is the guard mentioned in the letter, though he looks nothing like one. If the PCs drop coins in his bowl, he shakes his head. "Wrong key," he rumbles in a strong, out-of-character voice. Few beggars sound so powerful and robust.

If the PCs place the parchment sheet from "V" in the bowl, the beggar-guard nods his approval. "Go up," he says in his strong, powerful voice as he slips the parchment sheet into his ragged clothing. "The captain is waiting for you." With that, the iron gate swings open, providing access to the northeast stairs.

Impromptu Audition (EL 3)

A stone staircase takes the PCs to the top of the tower. The upper room is an enclosed greenhouse. A glass ceiling lets in light, while a moist, hot jungle fills the entire chamber. An old man sits at a worktable and is easily spotted when the PCs enter the chamber.

Other features of the enclosed greenhouse are described below.

Light: The glass ceiling allows the light of day to stream into the chamber (bright light).

Sound: PCs can automatically hear insects chirping and the patter of rain on the glass ceiling. A DC 14 Listen check reveals rustling deep within the indoor jungle (this is a dire ape, see below).

Reaction: If the PCs attack the old man, six Citadel guards appear in 1d4+1 rounds to protect him. Citadel guards are 3rd-level fighters (*Dungeon Master's Guide*, page 117).

Important Rules: Grapple, *Player's Handbook* page 155; forest terrain, *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 87.

Use the map of Viorr's Greenhouse, located on the inside cover, when running this encounter.

The Situation: The old man is Viorr Maelak, the one who summoned the adventurers. He is a captain in the King's Dark Lanterns, the covert intelligence arm of the King's Citadel of Breland. He has heard of the PCs' exploits and hopes they can help him resolve the Lucan situation. First, however, he wants to test their skills to make sure that there is at least some truth to the tales he has heard regarding them.

When the PCs enter the greenhouse, read:

An elderly human sits at a worktable at the edge of the indoor jungle. Pale and gaunt, he arranges orchids in a vase. Gardening implements cover the worktable, and a silver cane and a satchel hangs from the back of the man's chair. He says in a whispery voice, "I am Viorr Maelak. Welcome to my little piece of the wild."

After the PCs have introduced themselves and perhaps exchanged some pleasantries, read:

"I do have a job for you, a job that will make you rich," Viorr says as he reaches into a pocket. He pulls out potion vials and starts placing them in a neat row at the edge of the table. "But if you'll indulge me, there's a bit of an audition first. There's a wild ape in my greenhouse. I'd like you to defeat it without killing it. Unconscious is fine, bleeding is fine, magically subdued is fine. Just don't kill it. These are healing potions. Use them however you like. Oh, and do be careful. The ape is carnivorous and quite hungry."

There are six *potions of cure light wounds* on the table. Viorr follows the PCs as they explore the trails through the indoor jungle, limping along behind them with his cane. He won't intervene in a fight. Viorr deflects any questions the PCs have, saying, "Ape first; questions later. I want to see what you're capable of."

Dire Ape: hp 32; *Monster Manual* page 62.

Dire Ape Tactics: The dire ape begins the fight 15 feet up the tree marked "X" on the map. It waits until a PC passes within 5 feet of the tree, and then drops with a bellow (treat as a charge attack) as it claws the PC.

Considering the ape's Hide modifier of +1 (+2 for Dex but –1 for size), it's probable that the PCs see the ape in the tree before they get that close. If the PCs don't approach but obviously notice the dire ape, it climbs down and rushes the nearest character.

If the dire ape misses the same opponent twice in a row, it grows frustrated. On its next turn, it attempts to grapple and pin the foe, then rend it to death.

Development: The PCs have to contend with forest terrain during this encounter. The trees provide a measure of cover (+2 bonus to AC, +1 bonus on Reflex saves) and a high vantage point (with a DC 15 Climb check). The light undergrowth provides concealment and increases the DC of Tumble and Move Silently checks by 2. It costs 2 squares of movement to enter a square with light undergrowth (any squares on the map that contain jungle are considered to have light undergrowth).

If the PCs accidentally kill the dire ape, Viorr still decides to work with them if he believes they were trying to subdue it. In such a case, reduce his initial offer of payment in the next encounter by 20% to reflect his lessened confidence in their abilities.

When this encounter ends, Viorr leads the PCs back to his worktable. The encounter "A Mandate and a Mission" begins.

Experience: Award the PCs an extra 10% XP if they defeat the dire ape without killing it.

A Mission

This is an interaction encounter. The PCs get their mission and ask any questions they might have. Once the PCs follow Viorr back to the worktable, read:

Who Are the Dark Lanterns?

The King's Dark Lanterns is the intelligence branch of Breland's Citadel. The name comes from the idea that these agents work in secret, in the shadows, where no light shines. The Dark Lanterns follow the King's Fourth Mandate, which declares that the Dark Lanterns must hear and see everything, for information is power that can defend the crown from all threats—internal and external. (The first three mandates involve keeping the peace, patrolling the borders, and safeguarding Breland's interests abroad.)

This branch of the Citadel operates as a well-funded intelligence agency that has an elaborate network of secret agents and informants. Thanks to the efforts of the Dark Lanterns, King Boranel is uncommonly well informed about secret goings-on in Breland and across Khorvaire.

Viorr Maelak is a veteran of the Dark Lanterns, leading its efforts in Sharn. Lucan was particularly good at unobtrusively watching Sharn's suspected spies, which makes his betrayal all the more appalling. Viorr knows that a traitorous Lucan could have let countless spies operate with impunity simply by not reporting their activities. This realization makes Viorr fearful about what plans may be brewing in Sharn's many shadows.

Viorr rummages in the satchel hanging on his chair. "I represent an element of the King's Citadel known as the Dark Lanterns," he says. "We perform certain . . . intelligence-related . . . duties for King Boranel. We need adventurers of skill and action who can bring a rogue agent back to us—alive, if possible. If you're willing to swear to keep secret what you're about to hear, I'll tell you more."

Once the PCs do so, he continues:

"One of our best agents, Lucan Stellos, disappeared two days ago. Yesterday, a high-security vault we maintain here in Sharn was compromised, and a powerful magic sword was stolen. Shortly before dawn this morning, Lucan was spotted leaving Sharn by the east road. We want you to catch him and bring him and the sword back.

"We'll pay you 2,000 gold each to return Lucan alive, plus another 500 each if you recover the sword. If Lucan dies, we'll pay you 1,000 gold each for proof of his passing. Either way, we need Lucan back here—or dead so that he can't betray us. The price is nonnegotiable. Let's just pretend that we haggled, you won, and these are the terms we arrived at.

"Oh, and there's one other complication. Based on eyewitness accounts and the condition of the bodies left near the vault, Lucan appears to have gained powers he never had before. Still interested?"

Lucan

Viorr starts pulling papers out of the satchel. When he shows the PCs the picture of Lucan, show the players the illustration on this page. When he reveals the picture of Lucan's coach to the PCs, show the players the illustration on page 7.

"I'm going to go through this quickly, so pay attention," Viorr says. "Here's a picture of Lucan, done by one of the King's artists. Lucan is a male human, well trained in both combat and espionage. Here's a picture of the black coach he was seen traveling in as he passed through the east gate. Here are traveling papers that identify you as working for the King of Breland. Through House Vadalis, we've arranged to have magebred horses waiting for you in a stable near the east gate. Consider them an additional payment; we'll settle with House Vadalis later.

"Here's a letter of credit. If you run into unanticipated expenses, present it at any House Kundarak bank and you'll receive a cash advance. A friendly warning: King Boranel doesn't like to see his gold spent frivolously, so save the letter of credit until you really need it.

"The sword is called the soul blade, and it has a big ruby in the pommel. Our mages say it radiates evil, so be careful with it.

New Magic Item: Soul Blade

The *soul blade* is one of thirteen similar magic weapons crafted by Karrnath during the Last War. It was designed to give Karrnathi warlords great advantage while also ensuring their loyalty to king and crown through necromantic and arcane means. This particular sword was captured when a Karrnathi warlord fell to Brelish forces. Now in Lucan's hands, it wants to return home.

Soul Blade: *+2 keen longsword*, AL NE; Int 17, Wis 17, Cha 10; Speech, telepathy, 120 ft. darkvision and hearing; Ego score 18.

Lesser Powers: *Faerie fire* 3/day, *cure moderate wounds* 3/day, *doom* continually active.

Dedicated Power: *Confusion* (15-ft. burst, DC 16) at will.

Personality: This *soul blade* has a malign intelligence within it dedicated totally to the ascendancy of Karrnath as the center of Khorvairian civilization, and it won't rest until every other nation lies under Karrnath's heel. When the *soul blade* achieved dominance over Lucan, it directed him to return to Karrnath, setting the events of this adventure into motion.

The *soul blade*'s control over Lucan is nearly complete by the time the PCs first meet him. Whenever Lucan displeases the *soul blade*, it casts *cure moderate wounds* on Lucan, causing him great pain because he's undead.

The *soul blade*'s voice is thin and whispery, but its owner can hear it even amid the din of battle.

Strong transmutation; CL 15th; Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *cure moderate wounds*, *doom*, *faerie fire*, *confusion*; Price 87,615 gp; Cost 43,965 gp + 3,492 xp.

"We don't know what Lucan's intentions are, but we do have a clue based on a search of his living quarters. Based on some notes he made—notes he thought he destroyed—we know he's going to Trolanport. That's in Zilargo. The only other word we were able to salvage from the notes was 'krell.' We have no idea who or what a krell is.

"You now know everything I know. Lucan's got a head start of several hours. Any questions before you leave?"

The PCs undoubtedly have questions. Here are Viorr's answers, which you can read or paraphrase as you like.

How come you don't send your own agents? Why us? "Lucan was a trusted agent before all of this occurred. We have no way of knowing whether Lucan has allies within the Citadel. So I can't send my own people—I'm the only member of the Dark Lanterns that I trust. Time is against us, so I've turned to you for help."

Why do you want Lucan alive? "In our business, information is the most valuable commodity. We need to know what he knows, what he's told and to whom, and who he's now working for. Otherwise the same thing could happen again. Of course, dead is better than in enemy hands."

What kind of powers does Lucan have? "We aren't sure. He's a master of disguise, but that's a trained ability. He was able to command an otherwise loyal agent into opening the vault. He shrugged off attacks that should have brought down a normal man. He walked down the side of a tower just as you or I would walk across this room. Could be the sword, but he displayed some of these powers before he got his hands on it."

Tell us more about the soul blade. "We don't know much. We acquired it from a Karrnathi warlord shortly before the Last War ended, but we never got a chance to study it properly. We know it's strongly magical and strongly evil. Anything else would just be a guess at this point."

What did Lucan do for you? "Counterintelligence. He was superb at gaining the trust of enemy agents, figuring out who they worked for, and exposing entire networks of enemy spies. Not only have we lost that expertise, but one of those spy networks may have turned Lucan against us."

Who are Lucan's friends and enemies? "Lucan has a sister, Grilsha, here in Sharn. We've been looking for her all morning, but we haven't tracked her down yet. She's a striking young woman with long red hair. As for enemies, you can start with anyone from the intelligence community. Other nations, criminal groups, the dragonmarked houses—almost every power group has some sort of intelligence network it relies on, and Lucan has interfered with them all. There are a lot of people who want him dead or working on their side."

Why did we just fight a dire ape? "I wanted to see if you had the precision to take down a foe without killing it. Lucan's no ape, I realize. I also wanted to see if you could handle yourselves. I don't want to send an inexperienced party off on a dangerous and important mission for the King."

When the adventurers have asked all the questions they can think of, go on to Part Two.

Lucan's Coach

Part Two: Trolanport Masquerade

Let the PCs make whatever preparations they want, just so long as they're on their way within the hour. On the magebred horses, the PCs can cover 50 miles per day of travel. Lucan has about an eight-hour lead on the PCs (one day of normal travel), and he pushes so that his coach covers about 80 miles per day. It's about 800 miles along an Orien trade road from Sharn to Trolanport, traveling along the southern edge of the King's Forest before crossing the Trolan River and reaching the gnome city. That means, if all goes well, it takes Lucan ten days to reach Trolanport. But it doesn't go well. Lucan has trouble getting a new team of horses while he's still two days out from Trolanport. He's just getting back on the road on the twelfth day as the PCs catch up with him. (It takes the PCs sixteen days to make the trip if they travel at a normal pace of eight hours per day. If they decide to push their mounts, they will have to replace them after four consecutive days of accelerated travel.)

Along the way, there is a 10% chance per hour of travel that the PCs encounter someone else on the road. While camped, if the PCs aren't resting at an inn, the encounter chance increases to 20% per eight hours (make the check twice per resting period). If an encounter is indicated, refer to the table below.

Travel Encounters (EL 4)

d%	Encounter	Average EL
01–15	1d3 centaur bandits; hp 26 each; see *Monster Manual* page 32	5
16–25	1d3 ogre raiders; hp 29 each; see *Monster Manual* page 199	5
26–35	Military patrol; 2d6 mounted 1st-level warriors; Brelish (40%), Zil (35%), or House (25%) affiliated	4
36–45	1d3 blink dogs; hp 22 each; see *Monster Manual* page 28	4
46–55	1d3 worgs; hp 30 each; see *Monster Manual* page 256	4
56–65	1 wereboar; hp 34; see *Monster Manual* page 172	4
66–80	Merchants; 1d3 wagons, each with 1 1st-level expert and 2 1st-level warriors	3
81–85	1 cockatrice; hp 27; see *Monster Manual* page 37	3
86–100	Roll on the "Who Kicks in the Door?" table; see page 3	5

The Situation: Four heavy horses pull Lucan's coach. His sister, Grilsha, travels with him. She has agreed to help him out of family loyalty and because she loves her brother, despite the affliction that has turned him into a vampire. Lucan pushes his team of horses, making them travel sixteen hours per day. Every four days, he purchases replacement mounts and sells his fatigued horses. The PCs can discover this by making DC 10 Gather Information checks when they pull into towns along the way and take the time to ask around.

On the PCs' twelfth day of travel (sixth day, if they pushed their mounts as Lucan did), the adventurers catch up to Lucan's coach. Go on to the "Road Battle" encounter.

Road Battle (EL variable)

Lucan and Grilsha had some trouble replacing their fatigued horses at a small gnome hamlet about 160 miles or so from Trolanport. This delay gives the PCs the opportunity to catch up with them and have their first encounter with the rogue Dark Lantern agent. This encounter takes place at dusk, just before full darkness overtakes the land.

Other features of this encounter are described below.

Light: Dusk at start (shadowy illumination); night falls 3 rounds into the encounter.

Sound: None.

Reaction: When Grilsha spots the PCs, she tries to outrun them.

Important Rules: Mounted Combat, *Player's Handbook* page 157.

This is the first face-to-face meeting between the PCs and Grilsha. It begins when they spot Lucan's coach ahead of them on the road. Read:

As you crest a low rise in the road, you see ahead of you the black coach you've long been looking for. A shadowy figure controls the reins, but you notice long flowing red hair trailing from the figure as the black coach speeds along the road.

Have the PCs roll initiative to keep track of everyone's actions. The coach is 1,200 feet ahead of them when the encounter begins.

Unless the PCs do something unusual, Grilsha spots them—if she looks behind her. Every round there's a 25% chance she'll do this (roll at the start of the round). The coach moves at 50 feet per round before Grilsha notices the PCs, and 200 feet per round once she notices them and directs the horses to run. If the PCs direct their magebred horses to run, they can cover 260 feet per round.

Because this encounter starts with a linear chase on a straight section of road, you might try relative mapping rather than standard mapping. Put the coach near one edge of the map, and move the PCs toward it each round based on how much ground they make up. Switch to standard mapping when the coach stops.

The Situation: Lucan appealed to his sister for help, and she agreed. She doesn't care that he has become a vampire. She has promised to help him elude pursuit and reach Karrnath with the *soul blade*. Lucan is asleep in his coffin inside the coach when the encounter starts.

Grilsha: hp 29; see Appendix.

Lucan: hp 42; see Appendix.

Grilsha's Tactics: Grilsha casts *mage armor* and *shield* in the first two rounds after she notices the PCs, hunkering forward on the coach to get cover against foes behind her. In the likely event that the PCs gain on her, she starts attacking their horses. She uses her *lightning bolt* and *fireball* scrolls to damage as many pursuers as possible, and then aims at the horses with *magic missile* spells or her hand crossbow. She also kicks the coach wall as hard as she can until Lucan wakes up. If things turn sour, she uses *invisibility* and *fly* to get out of the immediate area, followed by her *phantom steed* scrolls to finish the trip to Trolanport.

Lucan's Tactics: There's a 50% chance each round that Lucan wakes up, and he automatically wakes up if the coach stops. During his first round awake, he gets out of his coffin. Next, he opens the shutter on the back of the coach (treat as an arrow slit) and uses his children of the night ability to call wolves from the forest off the side of the road. He watches the fight from within the coach, only emerging if Grilsha goes down or the coach stops. Lucan uses his alternate form or gaseous form ability to escape into the forest; he has no interest in fighting at this point in the adventure.

Development: In the likely event that Lucan and Grilsha escape, they continue their journey to Trolanport, laying low and buying another coffin if necessary. When the PCs reach Trolanport and try to find Lucan or the meaning of the word "krell," go to the Trolanport Inquisitive Work encounter. The PCs have more journeying—and thus more chances for random encounters—to accomplish before they reach the capital of Zilargo, however.

Trolanport Inquisitive Work (EL 4)

Trolanport is the capital of the gnome nation of Zilargo. Unlike other cities, the coastal metropolis features a crisscrossing network of canals and flooded thoroughfares instead of solid streets. The city also has streets made of stone and a variety of bridges connecting them, but the easiest way to get around is by using the small boats that travel up and down the canals.

In Trolanport, the PCs can attempt to locate Lucan and Grilsha, or they can try to find out what "krell" is. Refer to "The Situation," below, for more details.

Other features of Trolanport are described below.

Light: Overcast daylight (bright illumination).

Sound: Talking, clattering hooves, haggling, water splashing in the canals, and other typical city sounds (automatic), sneaking sahuagin (Move Silently +1).

Reaction: To combat on city streets—1d4+4 gnome guards arrive in 1d4+4 rounds. Gnome guards are 1st-level warriors (*Monster Manual*, page 134).

The Situation: The PCs need to dig up some leads as to where Lucan has gone, or to the meaning of the word "krell" that Viorr told them he found among Lucan's notes. While the PCs move around the city tracking down leads, sahuagin muggers silently track them through the waterways and eventually confront them.

INVESTIGATION

Efforts to find Lucan don't pan out. Trolanport is a teeming metropolis, and Lucan's skill at disguise and subterfuge make it impossible to find him after only a few hours of asking questions.

On the other hand, learning about "krell" requires only that the PCs spend 1d4+1 hours talking to people and then make a Gather Information check (which can be made untrained and can be retried until a result of 15 or higher is achieved).

What the PCs learn depends on the result of the successful Gather Information check. Read or paraphrase from the information below as appropriate.

Check Result 15–24: "K-R-E-L-L, you say? Well, there's an Aundairian diplomat here, goes by the name of Neya ir'Krell. There's some sort of high society function at the Aundairian embassy tonight."

Check Result 25 or Higher: All of the above, plus a little more. "It's a masquerade ball, and it's invitation only. Should be lots of music and dancing—and whatever else diplomats do after the sun sets and the moons rise."

The Aundairian Embassy is a massive white marble structure on Trolanport's Embassy Row. Other than an impeccably maintained courtyard beyond a tall wrought iron fence, very little of it is visible from the canal-street. An overwhelming number of guards are stationed on Embassy Row.

FIGHT

During the PCs' investigation, two sahuagin muggers try to sneak up on them, slipping out of the canal when the PCs enter a narrow side street or alleyway. Trolanport is battling an epidemic of sahuagin-related crime right now, and the PCs might get drawn in if they're not careful. The sahuagin normally live farther out in the ocean, but a small band has braved Trolanport in search of food and plunder.

Sahuagin (2): hp 11, 13; *Monster Manual* page 217.

Sahuagin Tactics: The sahuagin try to use their Hide modifier of +6 (+10 underwater) and their Move Silently modifier of +1 to sneak up on the PCs through the canals. Then they move into flanking position against an individual PC if possible, attacking with their tridents and talons. If reduced to below 5 hit points, a sahuagin tries to dive into the water and escape into the murky depths.

Development: If the PCs want to get further involved in trying to defuse the sahuagin threat, Trolanport officials can hire them to locate and drive out the sahuagin band. A total of eight sahuagin are in the band, which hides in an underground cave near the port canals.

ABANDON ALL WEAPONS, YE WHO ENTER HERE (EL 4)

The PCs learn that "Krell" is a person, not a place or an object. Neya ir'Krell is a high-ranking diplomat in the Aundairian embassy. Indeed, although the PCs don't know it yet, she works for the Royal Eyes of Aundair, the intelligence agency that serves the Queen of Aundair. It seems that the diplomat is hosting a high society function at the embassy tonight—a masquerade ball designed to entertain and to provide an environment where various covert transactions can occur. One such transaction involves Lucan and the ambassador. She plans to provide Lucan with traveling papers and letters of passage that will get him safely and discreetly to Karrnath.

This encounter consists of the PCs trying to gain entry to the Aundairian embassy.

Other features of this encounter are described below.

Light: Everbright lanterns provide bright illumination to the grounds around the embassy and the area around the doors.

Sound: Murmuring of crowd noise and music from the party inside the embassy (automatic).

Reaction: To actual combat or an attempt to rush inside the embassy, 1d4 embassy guards arrive to make arrests in 3 rounds (automatic). See statistics for embassy guards below.

Grilsha

The Situation: This encounter is essentially a test of wits—the PCs have to get past the guards at the door to crash Neya ir'Krell's party. When the PCs enter the grounds of the Aundairian Embassy in the evening, read:

Blinking magical lights created by gnome entertainers guide you through the Aundairian Embassy's courtyard toward a set of heavy wooden doors. Beyond the doors, you hear the sound of music and laughter.

Two gnomes in full plate with hooked hammers at their sides stand on either side of the doors. A box full of white paper sits next to their feet. "Welcome to the Night of a Thousand Stars. Invitations, please," one gnome says glumly.

EL 4

The guards won't let in uninvited guests, and they won't let weapons or those wearing medium or heavy armor into the ballroom, either. (See below for more information about the rules of the occasion.)

Embassy Guards: Male gnome fighter 2; CR 2; Small humanoid; HD 2d10+6; hp 17; Init +2; Spd 15 ft.; AC 20, touch 12, flat-footed 19; Base Atk +2; Grp –2; Atk +4 melee (1d6/×3, masterwork gnome hooked hammer) or +5 ranged (1d8/19–20, heavy crossbow); Full Atk +2 melee (1d6/×3, masterwork gnome hooked hammer) and +2 melee (1d4/×4, masterwork gnome hooked hammer); or +5 ranged (1d8/19–20, heavy crossbow); SA spell-like abilities; SQ —; AL LG; SV Fort +6, Ref +2, Will +0; Str 10, Dex 15, Con 17, Int 13, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Jump –9, Listen +2, Spot +2, Sense Motive +2; Combat Expertise, Improved Trip, Two-Weapon Fighting.

Possessions: Full plate armor, masterwork gnome hooked hammer, heavy crossbow with 10 bolts.

Guard Tactics: These guards are provided to the embassy by the Trolanport government, and they're eager to do their jobs well because diplomatic assignments tend to be pretty cushy and they'd like to be offered this kind of assignment again.

For a guest to get past the door, he or she must meet three conditions.

1. Each guest must have an invitation. "Whether you lost it or not, we were specifically told to make no exceptions," say the gnomes. The guards collect invitations from each guest upon entry, and then drop them into the box at their feet. The invitations are identical; they don't mention names. (If the PCs stick around for five minutes or so, they see the gnomes scrutinize an invitation, drop it in the box, and open the doors for a guest.)

The PCs can get an invitation by sneaking one out of the box, either with a *mage hand* spell or with a DC 20 Sleight of Hand check. The gnomes get Spot checks (DC 10 to spot *mage hand*, and a DC equal to the check result for Sleight of Hand) to notice what the PCs are up to. Another guest shows up in the courtyard every five minutes or so, and it's certainly possible to use Sleight of Hand or more violent methods to get invitations from guests as they arrive.

2. Guests must surrender weapons and any obviously dangerous magic. The gnomes look the PCs over, and they automatically notice any weapons the PCs haven't taken pains to conceal. The guards explain that they'll happily check weapons in the guardhouse, and the PCs can retrieve them when the party ends. The guards also look askance at obvious magic items such as glowing staffs, brightly shining helmets, and so forth. They ask what the item does, and then warn the PCs that casting spells inside the ballroom is against the law.

If a PC tries to sneak a concealed light weapon past the guards, have the character make a Sleight of Hand check opposed by the guard's Spot check. This use of the Sleight of Hand skill can be made untrained using the PC's Dexterity bonus. Daggers provide a +2 bonus

because they're easy to hide, and PCs wearing heavy or bulky clothes get a +2 bonus as well. If the PC succeeds, the guard's don't notice the weapon. If the PC fails, the guards notice the weapon and bar the character from entry. The PCs can also use spells such as *invisibility* or *shrink item* to get a weapon into the ballroom.

The guards believe anything the PCs tell them about nonweapon magic items, as long as it's even slightly plausible. Magic isn't their area of expertise.

3. Guests must be properly attired. At a minimum, this means a noble's outfit, and most of the guests are dressed in clothes fit for royalty. Characters who aren't up to the dress code are sent to a seamstress a few blocks away where they can buy noble outfits (75 gp), royal outfits (300 gp), or masquerade costumes (100–500 gp, depending on how gaudy and fanciful the costume is).

Another part of the dress code is that shields, medium armor, and heavy armor are forbidden. "We're at peace, sir, haven't you heard?" say the gnome guards. The guards happily check armor and shields in the guardhouse, and PCs can pick such items up after the ball ends.

A final aspect of the dress code requires that all guests be masked. The guards can provide simple domino-style masks for PCs who "forgot" to bring their own.

PCs who don't have the right clothes can either make a quick shopping trip or use illusion magic such as *disguise self* to trick the guards. Glamered armor likewise fools the guards completely.

Development: If the characters fail in an attempt to steal an invitation, get caught with a concealed weapon, or otherwise make a nuisance of themselves, the guards won't give them a second chance. The guards threaten them with arrest if they don't leave. But a change of the guard twenty minutes after the PCs first arrive means the PCs get a second chance if they mess things up the first time.

When the PCs get inside the ballroom, their next encounter is the "Masquerade Ball," below.

Experience: Award the characters full experience for getting past the gnome guards and into the party, regardless of the method they used to accomplish it.

Masquerade Ball (EL variable)

This set-piece encounter provides opportunities for the adventurers to interact and verbally spar with NPCs. The sparring gets significantly more physical at the encounter's end, transforming the party into a confusing fight when Aundairian agents make their move on Lucan.

Other features of this encounter are described below.

Light: Dancing light spells drift across the room, providing an equal chance each round for bright or shadowy illumination.

Sound: Murmuring of the crowd and music from an elf quartet on the stage (automatic; imposes –5 penalty on Listen checks to hear other sounds because of the volume).

Reaction: To drawn weapons or actual combat—1d4 embassy guards arrive in 3 rounds (automatic). See statistics for embassy guards on page 10.

Important Rules: Influencing NPC Attitudes, *Player's Handbook*, page 72; Perform skill, page 79.

The Situation: Neya ir'Krell, the ranking Aundairian diplomat in Trolanport, leads a double life. In addition to being a diplomat for her nation, she also serves as an agent for the Royal Eyes of Aundair, the intelligence-gathering arm of the crown of Aundair. This high society masquerade ball provides cover for a number of Neya's various covert activities, as well as being an evening's entertainment for some of the most powerful and influential people in Trolanport. Anyone who's anyone in Trolanport's diplomatic community attends the annual Aundairian masquerade ball.

Neya serves two masters tonight. Her loyalty to and friendship with Lucan (she doesn't know he's a vampire now) compel her to provide the aid he requested—traveling papers and passage to Karrnath. Her loyalty to Aundair, however, demands that she capture Lucan and turn him over to her superiors in the Royal Eyes. Neya doesn't see a conflict between these divided loyalties. She puts a trap in place for Lucan, working with the agent Meena ir'Erdalis, while also agreeing to provide Lucan with the aid he needs. If Lucan escapes the trap, he is free to leave Zilargo and continue his journey. If he can't, Neya reasons, that's not her problem.

The guests include gnome government officials and diplomats, diplomats from the Five Nations working in Trolanport, and select representatives from a few of the dragonmarked houses. A quartet of elf musicians plays in the far corner of the ballroom. The quartet uses a guitar, flute, harpsichord, and drum. These elves are excellent entertainers who also happen to work for the House Thuranni Shadow Network of spies and information brokers.

Unless the PCs purchased costumes, they take a –2 penalty on Charisma-based checks because the guests and servants regard them with suspicion for being improperly dressed for the occasion.

The masks and costumes mean that just as it's hard for the PCs to find Lucan or Neya, so too is it difficult for Lucan to find Neya or Meena to find Lucan. Thus, the PCs have some time to mill around and get a sense of the room before anything else happens. They can dance, chat with some of Trolanport's more important diplomats and citizens, or simply eat and drink like nobles for an evening.

Use the Aundairian Ballroom map, printed on the inside of the cover, when running this encounter.

When the PCs get past the guards at the doors and you're ready to start the encounter, read:

Every wall of the ballroom has been festooned with black and white crepe, and drifting, darting magical lights provide the room's illumination. A quartet of elf musicians plays in a far corner of the

ballroom, providing music for approximately a dozen dancers. About forty other people sit at round tables or stand around the edge of the dance floor, conversing in quiet tones while servants bring them drinks and small tidbits of food.

The ballroom's most striking feature is the costumes that everyone—host, guest, and servant alike—wears. Everyone also wears a mask, many decorated with feathers, fur, sequins, or costume jewelry. Many of the women have on long, diaphanous gowns, while the men wear form-fitting breeches and vests that glitter with golden thread and the sparkle of tiny gems. It appears that about a third of the guests are gnomes.

Masquerade Guests: By the time the PCs make their way into the ballroom, a number of important NPCs are already present. These include Lucan (wearing an eagle mask), Grilsha (wearing an owl mask), Neya ir'Krell (wearing a gold dragon mask), and Meena ir'Erdalis (wearing a blue dragon mask), an agent of the Royal Eyes of Aundair determined to capture and interrogate Lucan. Statistics for Neya and Meena, as well as Meena's agents (who wear simple domino masks), follow.

Neya ir'Krell: Female human aristocrat 2/rogue 4; CR 5; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8 + 4d6; hp 25; Init +7; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15, touch 15, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +4; Grp +4; Atk or Full Atk +4 melee (1d4/19–20, dagger) or +7 ranged (1d4/19–20, hand crossbow); SQ evasion, sneak attack +2d6, trapfinding, trap sense +1; AL LN; SV Fort +1, Ref +7, Will +5; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +11, Diplomacy +13, Gather Information +11, Hide +8, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Move Silently +8, Open Lock +8, Sense Motive +12, Spot +6; Improved Initiative, Negotiator, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot.

Languages: Common, Gnome.

Possessions: Dagger, hand crossbow with 10 bolts, masquerade costume, noble's outfit, pouch (contains 25 sp, 15 gp, and 10 pp), *ring of protection +2.*

Meena ir'Erdalis: Female human wizard 5; CR 5; Medium humanoid ; HD 5d4+10 plus 3; hp 25; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10 (16 with *mage armor* and *cat's grace*), touch 10 (12 with spells), flat-footed 10 (14 with spells); Base Atk +2; Grp +1; Atk or Full Atk +1 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger) or +2 ranged (1d4–1/19–20, dagger); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +1, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 10, Con 14, Int 16, Wis 12, Cha 13.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +4, Disguise +3, Concentration +10, Knowledge (arcana) +11, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +11; Combat Casting, Craft Wand, Spell Focus (enchantment), Toughness.

Wizard Spells Prepared (5/5/4/3): 0—*daze* (DC 14), *detect magic* (2), *mage hand* (2); 1st—*charm person* (DC 15), *disguise self, mage armor, magic missile, obscuring mist*; 2nd—*cat's grace, daze monster* (DC 16), *touch of idiocy, web* (DC 15); 3rd—*fireball* (DC 16), *suggestion* (2) (DC 17).

Possessions: Dagger, pouch (contains spell components), purse (contains 15 gp and 7 pp), masquerade costume, noble's outfit, *wand of hold person.*

Aundair Agents (2): Male human monk 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 14, touch 13, flat-footed 11; Base Atk +1; Grp +7; Atk +3 melee (1d6+2, unarmed strike); Full Atk +2/+2 melee (1d6+2, unarmed strike); SQ evasion; AL LN; SV Fort +5, Ref +6, Will +5; Str 15, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 12, Wis 13, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +7, Hide +7, Jump +7, Move Silently +7, Tumble +7; Combat Reflexes, Dodge, Improved Grapple, Mobility.

Possessions: Bracers of armor +1, cloak of resistance +1, masquerade costume.

Development: Unless the PCs do something to intervene, the events in this encounter occur in a certain order, each one happening a number of minutes after the PCs enter the ballroom.

15 Minutes: Lucan locates Neya. He greets her and leads her to the dance floor. Neya gives Lucan the password he needs to board the airship, as well as a small pouch containing traveling papers and a letter of credit. Meena arrives at the affair with her agents. Meena is a legitimate guest; her agents are disguised as servants.

20 Minutes: During their dance, Neya noticed that Lucan's hands were cold, and they didn't warm to her touch. After the dance, she discreetly sends for a spellcaster to cast a divination and find out what has happened to her longtime contact. Neya also encourages Lucan to engage other guests in conversation (so he doesn't leave before she determines what's going on).

25 Minutes: Meena finds Lucan and asks him to dance. He accepts.

30 Minutes: Meena tries to use a *charm person* spell on Lucan in the middle of the dance floor. It fails

Making an End Run

If the PCs would rather not deal with the guards, there are many other ways to get inside the embassy. Two *charm person* spells or a *sleep* spell do the trick, as will *invisibility* if the PCs wait for the gnomes to open the doors for another guest.

The PCs can also get into the ballroom through the unguarded servants' entrance around the corner. If the PCs dress like kitchen servants, they won't be challenged, although they soon get pressed into service washing dishes if they linger in the kitchen area. A closet in the kitchen area contains waiter outfits, and the PCs find this easily if they look around.

automatically, because undead are immune to mind-affecting spells. Meena recoils, suspecting that Lucan isn't what he appears to be. Lucan calls forth the *soul blade* from his *glove of storing*. Combat begins as the guests and servants panic, scream, and attempt to flee.

Rather than using the above information literally, gauge the interest level of your players as the masquerade ball unfolds. If the PCs start chatting up party guests with gusto, take to the dance floor, or otherwise amuse themselves with the ball's diversions, let this continue as long as they're having a good time. Adjust the times in the above sequence of events to give them as much time as they need.

Once the fight starts, the party is over. Go to "A Fight Breaks Out," below. Until then, the PCs can interact with the party as they please. They may engage in some or all of the following activities.

Search for Neya or Lucan

The combination of poor lighting, outrageous costumes, and masks make this task much trickier than it would otherwise be. It takes a DC 25 Spot check to recognize Neya from a verbal description, and a DC 35 Spot check to recognize Lucan (who is wearing a second disguise under his mask) or to locate his sister Grilsha. It takes 5 minutes to scrutinize everyone in the room. For each clue the would-be spotter knows about Neya or Lucan's costumes (clues acquired by talking to guests and servants), take 1 minute off the time required to scan the room.

Ask Guests about Neya or Lucan

Guests and servants start out with indifferent attitudes. If a PC asks a guest to point out Neya or Lucan, have the PC make a DC 15 Diplomacy check to try to change the guest's attitude to friendly. A friendly guest doesn't point out Neya or Lucan directly, but instead provides a descriptive clue, such as "Neya is wearing a mask with gold feathers" or "That Lucan fellow has diamonds running down the creases of his sleeves and he's wearing a single leather glove on his right hand. Quite striking, actually." A PC who presses can obtain a second clue, but no guest will put up with an interrogation. A character who presses too hard changes the guest's attitude to unfriendly, and the guest starts asking questions in turn, such as "Why are you curious about Neya?" and "Who are you, again?"

Talk to Neya

Neya begins the encounter with an indifferent attitude toward the PCs. She makes polite but inconsequential

Masquerade Ball

conversation with any PC she meets. If the PCs ask Neya about Lucan, she says she's never heard the name before, using her Bluff skill to cover her surprise over the question.

If the PCs confront Neya more directly or reveal that they aren't ordinary guests, she becomes annoyed (unfriendly) but curious, probing them for their motives while warning them that they're in over their heads and should just go back to Sharn. "Leave these games of death and deceit to the experts," she says.

If the PCs talk to Neya after she has danced with Lucan, her attitude immediately shifts to friendly if they mention Lucan's name. In this case, her attitude represents her intense curiosity to find out what happened to Lucan rather than warm feelings toward the PCs. Neya does her best to find out what the PCs know, agreeing to a cautious, one-step-at-a-time exchange of information. She reveals Lucan's past in vague terms, leaving out her own espionage activities, but explaining that her relationship with Lucan goes back a number of years. "He has performed services for me," she admits, "and I have helped him on occasion." She absolutely wants to know what the PCs know, so she peppers them with a barrage of questions whenever they tell her something new.

Talk to Lucan

Lucan has an initial attitude of unfriendly toward the PCs. He listens politely and intently to anything a character says, using his Sense Motive and Spot skills against the PCs' Bluff and Disguise skills to assess whether they are who they seem to be.

If Lucan suspects something, or if he recognizes the characters from the battle on the road to Trolanport, his attitude immediately changes to hostile. "Engaging in battle in the middle of a crowded party—especially one at the Aundairian embassy—is unwise. Now, what do you really want?"

He is willing to banter with the PCs, but he won't agree to any deals they might offer—the *soul blade* won't let him. Lucan is smart enough to act interested, however, because it provides clues as to whom the PCs are working for, what their capabilities are, and what they want.

If a PC spends at least 1 minute talking to Lucan, have that character make a DC 25 Sense Motive check. If the check succeeds, reveal that Lucan's behavior seems strangely stilted, as if he were being influenced by an enchantment. The PC senses the influence of the *soul blade*.

If the PCs engage Grilsha in conversation rather than approaching her brother, she waves Lucan over as quickly as possible, and then stands by, alert for danger, while Lucan talks to the PCs.

Dance

The dance of the evening is called the caravan. It's a dance for couples similar to the tango, with many flourishes and lots of movement across the dance floor. Anyone with a trained partner can go through the motions passably. A PC who's good at Perform (dance), however, can really shine. Treat this as a performance, as described on page 79 of the *Player's Handbook*. It takes 20 minutes on the dance floor to make a significant impression. The PC makes no money doing this, but thereafter earns a +2 circumstance bonus on Charisma-based checks during the remainder of the ball if the performance was great (DC 20) or better. There's no shortage of willing dance partners of any gender or race.

Perform with the Band

A bard or some other character with ranks in Perform (sing) or Perform (percussion, string, or wind instruments) can ask the bandleader between songs about sitting in for a song or two. The band members have an initial attitude of indifferent toward the PCs. It takes a DC 15 Diplomacy check to convince the bandleader to let the character do a song or two. If the PC succeeds, make a Perform check and consult page 79 of the *Player's Handbook* to determine the audience's reaction. The PC makes no money doing this, but thereafter earns a +2 circumstance bonus on Charisma-based checks during the ball if the performance was great (DC 20) or better.

The members of the band all work for House Thuranni's Shadow Network. They watch and listen for information to pass along to their superiors. None of the band members does anything overt, but they could be working with Areyndee if you want (see the "Who Kicks in the Door?" table on page 3).

Eat and Drink

This activity requires no checks, but the food is tasty and the champagne fizzy. PCs seeking more exotic drinks can request them at the bar. Drinks are free.

Light Fingers

There's one in every group, isn't there? A DC 20 Sleight of Hand check is sufficient to separate a guest from a coin purse or some of the jewelry he or she is wearing, and the typical guest has a Spot modifier of +1 on attempts to notice the theft. However, would-be thieves take a –4 penalty on any Sleight of Hand check during the ball because so many bystanders are closely examining each other. A character who gets caught triggers a cry for the guards. A successful attempt yields the following loot (roll d%): 01–50, 2d12 gp; 51–75, 2d6 pp; 76–90, jewelry worth 1d4×100 gp; 91–100, jewelry worth 2d4×100 gp.

A FIGHT BREAKS OUT

At some point, a battle begins—Lucan is identified and attacked, either by the PCs or by Meena. Once the fight starts, the crowd panics. On the map of the ballroom, represent the crowd as four Huge swarms (each covering a 3-square-by-3-square area). Start one crowd on the dance floor, one near the bar, and the other two in the middle of the ballroom. A crowd moves 20 feet toward the nearest exit at initiative count 0 in each round (the guests try to move faster, but they get in each other's way).

The Situation: At least two separate groups have come to the masquerade ball to capture Lucan—the PCs (working for Breland), and Meena and her agents (working for Aundair). Neya ir'Krell, meanwhile, has covered all her bases. She has honored her past commitment to Lucan by providing him with the aid he has requested, while staying loyal to the Royal Eyes of Aundair by alerting them to Lucan's plans to attend the masquerade. She doesn't see this as a conflict. If Lucan gets captured, it was meant to be. If he escapes, then she has returned the favor and provided him with the means to get to Karrnath.

Once Lucan reveals himself and weapons are drawn, the PCs must contend with a number of obstacles.

The first challenge comes from Lucan and Grilsha, who have no intention of being captured by either Aundairian agents or adventurers working for the Citadel's Dark Lanterns.

The second challenge takes the form of Meena and her two agents of the Royal Eyes. They want to capture Lucan by any means possible, and they have no intention of letting him fall into the hands of a foreign nation. (Neya, on the other hand, steps back to watch events unfold once combat begins. She feels she has done her work in this matter, and in any event she must maintain her cover as a simple diplomat at all costs.)

The third challenge takes the form of the party guests, who move as Huge swarms as they attempt to get out of the ballroom.

The fourth and final challenge comes from the embassy guards, who try to subdue or incapacitate all the combatants in the ballroom.

Tactics for all of these opponents follow.

Lucan and Grilsha Tactics: Lucan and the *soul blade* are angry that Lucan's cover has been blown. Grilsha moves to Lucan's side on her first action and prepares to cast spells that will help them escape. She has *invisibility* and *cat's grace* ready for just this purpose. If combat can't be avoided, she provides aid as the situation warrants. Lucan snaps his fingers and calls forth the *soul blade* from his *glove of storing*. He fiercely attacks whoever attacked him for a round or two, then starts making for the exit. Between the pair, they use children of the night, *darkness* spells, and *invisibility* to get away.

If Lucan spots Neya during this time, he whirls on her with dreadful anger. Under the assumption that she betrayed him, he rushes to unleash his fury upon her. Grilsha reminds him that time is short, so he won't stay to finish Neya off, but he will try to deal as much damage as he can before he leaves. If the PCs try to defend Neya, they have an easier time of getting information out of her after Lucan escapes.

Royal Eyes' Agents Tactics: Meena and her two agents attack Lucan as soon as combat breaks out, no matter how it started. The agents engage Lucan in melee combat while Meena uses spells, although many of her enchantments won't be effective against Lucan. After a round of trading blows, one agent tries to grapple Lucan, only to discover why it's a bad idea to grapple a vampire—Lucan easily overpowers him and feeds. Once Meena realizes that most of her spells won't work against Lucan, she turns them on anyone who's interfering—probably the PCs.

Crowd Tactics: Each Huge swarm of partygoers moves 20 feet toward the nearest exit every round, on initiative count 0. The swarm moves in as direct a path as possible. If the swarm moves over a square occupied by a PC or one of the other combatants, that crowd engulfs that character. The character doesn't take any damage, but he or she must attempt a DC 15 Reflex save. If the character succeeds on the save, the crowd moves on, leaving the character where he is. (The save must be attempted each time a crowd moves over a character's square, so it is possible that a character will have to make multiple saves in the round.) If a character fails the save, he or she becomes part of the swarm and moves with it. On the character's turn, he or she can attempt a new Reflex save; if the save succeeds, the character breaks free and can move normally.

If a character rolls a natural 1 while making a Reflex save against the crowd, he or she falls prone. A prone character takes 1d6 points of damage each time the crowd-swarm moves over his or her square.

Guard Tactics: The embassy guards aren't exactly clever tacticians; they simply fire crossbows at anyone who's fighting, figuring that it's easier to sort these things out once everyone is shackled. They use their gnome hooked hammers only if pressed.

Aftermath

The goal of this encounter is for Lucan to escape. Grilsha sacrifices herself, if necessary, to make sure that occurs. Once he gets out of the ballroom, he uses his alternate form, gaseous form, or spider climb ability to disappear into the night. He can't be followed.

After the battle, the PCs need to find out where Lucan is going. Neya knows, and she'll tell the characters if she can talk to them privately, away from Meena or her agents.

Neya pulls rank as a diplomat and dismisses the guards. If the PCs defended her, she feels obligated to help them. If the PCs trade information, telling her something about Lucan that she doesn't know, she provides details of Lucan's destination. If the PCs decide to press the issue and threaten to expose or embarrass Neya over this incident, she decides to give them the information if they agree to let her know how this all works out.

Neya **Comes Clean:** In the end, Neya agrees to help the PCs because Lucan has become a vampire; she feels he tricked her and took advantage of their friendship. Neya tells the PCs that she provided Lucan with a password that grants free passage on a House Lyrandar airship leaving from Trolanport for Karrnath this evening. She also identifies Grilsha as Lucan's sister. She provides the PCs with no other aid, other than to tell them they are free to go—despite all the trouble they caused this evening.

Part Three: Sky Raiders of Eberron

Once the PCs learn that Lucan has passage aboard a House Lyrandar airship, they need to hurry to reach the docking tower across the city. The docking tower is a tall structure where an elemental airship can moor, exchange passengers and cargo, take on supplies, and then disembark without ever touching the ground.

The docking tower rises above the rest of the structures in Trolanport and can be seen from almost anywhere within the city. The PCs can't trail Lucan and Grilsha (if she escaped the masquerade along with her brother), but they can rush toward the docking tower. House Lyrandar controls and operates the tower. The characters reach the tower in time to see final preparations being made for the departure of an elemental-powered airship.

In this part of the adventure, the PCs must get aboard the Lyrandar airship before it departs or find another method for following Lucan to Karrnath. An attack occurs about twenty-five hours into the air journey, resulting in the probable crash of the airship.

The Lyrandar Airship: The airship *Cloud's Destiny* is one of the elemental-powered vessels in House Lyrandar's small but growing fleet. It leaves from the Trolanport docking tower at this late hour for the fifty-hour trip to Starilaskur. After a day at the Brelish city, the airship continues on to Korth. The second leg of the trip takes about thirty-seven hours, at which time the airship makes a stop in Flamekeep, the capital of Thrane. The following day, the last part of the voyage takes place, a fifteen-hour trip to Korth in Karrnath. Of course, this all depends on an uneventful trip. The PCs' trip is anything but uneventful.

Final Boarding Call (EL 5)

This encounter is essentially a race against time—can the PCs get past Lucan's minions and board the airship before it casts off from the docking tower? The docking tower is an 80-foot-tall structure. A winding staircase leads up through the tower to the upper-level docking platform. Six docking berths radiate from the central platform. Only one airship is moored at the dock on this evening, and rarely do the citizens of Trolanport ever see more than two airships at the tower at any given time.

This encounter takes place at Docking Berth 3, where *Cloud's Destiny* is moored and taking on its last passengers and cargo before departing.

Use the map of Docking Berth 3, printed on the inside cover, when running this encounter.

Other features of this encounter are described here.

Light: Night; *everbright lanterns* marked on map provide bright illumination for 60 feet.

Sound: The PCs can automatically hear the fiery rumble of the elemental bound to the airship as it prepares to power the vessel.

Reaction: Once combat begins on the dock, the airship's crew begins to cast off. This process takes 6 rounds.

When the characters reach Docking Berth 3, read:

Gnome dockworkers coil up the lines that hold the massive House Lyrandar airship, Cloud's Destiny, to the tower. A single gangplank connects the airship to the berth's platform. The airship looks like it's just about ready to depart. A few of the gnomes stand among the cargo crates that fill the berth between you and the airship. They ready their weapons and move to block your path.

Lucan *dominated* these gnome minions when he arrived at the docking tower. He ordered them to bar all further access to the airship and remain on guard until after the vessel has departed.

Lucan's Dominated Minions (5): Male gnome warrior 4; CR 2; Small humanoid; HD 4d8; hp 18; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grp +1; Atk or Full Atk +6 melee (1d6+1/19–20, masterwork longsword) or +7 ranged (1d4+1/×3, masterwork composite shortbow); SQ gnome traits; AL N; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Jump +8; Combat Reflexes, Point Blank Shot.

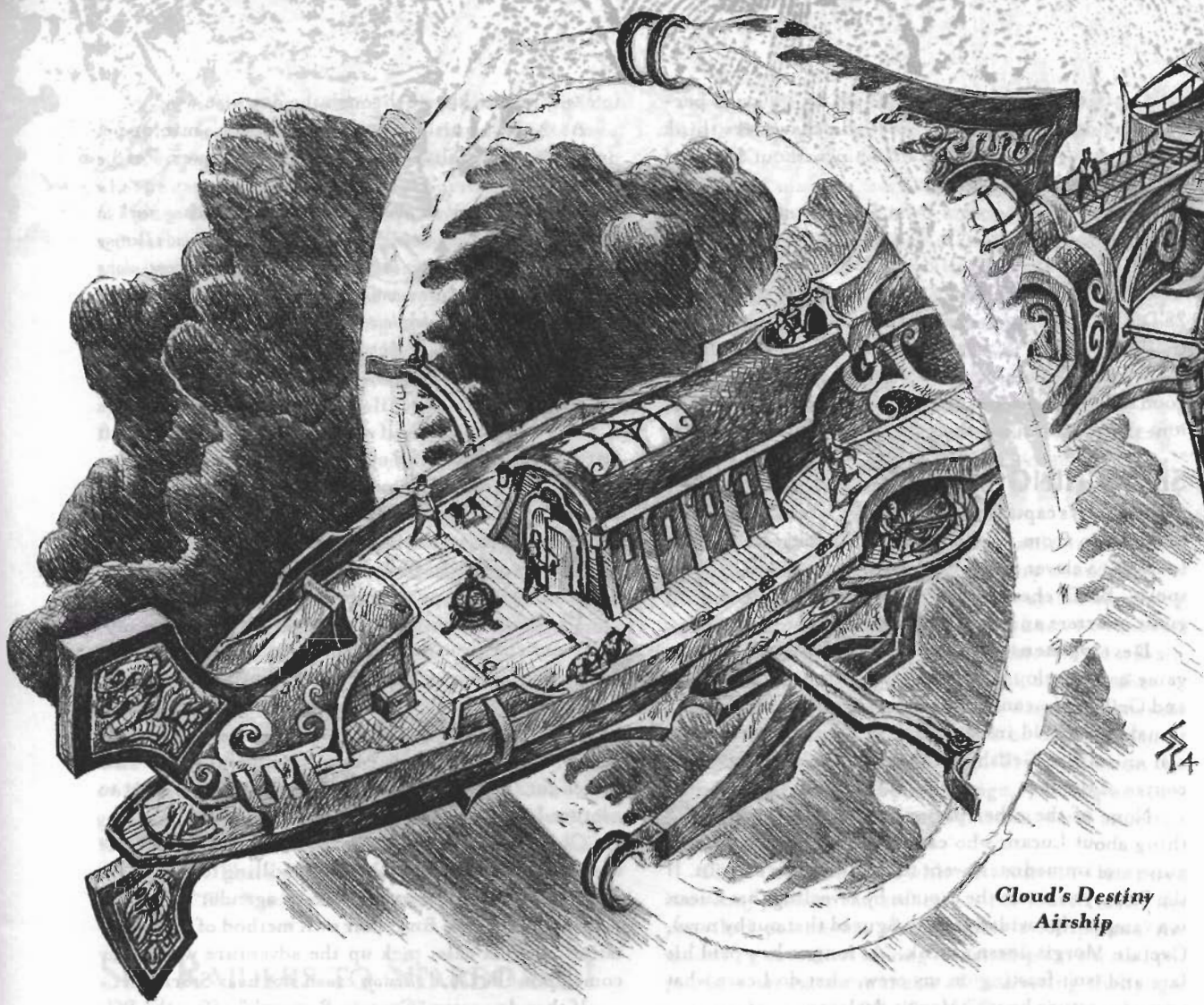
Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, masterwork longsword, masterwork buckler, masterwork composite shortbow (+1 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, *potion of cure light wounds.*

Minion Tactics: The minions follow their orders, concentrating their attacks on whoever is closest to the gangplank. First they try shooting the PCs from a distance, and then attempt to flank any PC who makes a break for the gangplank. Remember to make use of the gnomes' Combat Reflexes feat, which grants them additional attacks of opportunity as PCs try to rush past.

Crew Tactics: Other than crouching and ducking, the airship's crew doesn't get involved in the fight on the platform. It's not their concern, and getting involved only puts the safety of the ship—and its on-time departure—at risk. The crew has an initial attitude of hostile toward any entreaties for aid the PCs might make. They are noncombatants, and immediately begin casting off when violence begins.

Development: At initiative count 0 in the fifth round of the fight, the crew retracts the gangplank. Doing this produces a 5-foot gap between the airship and the platform. At initiative count 0 in the sixth round of the fight, the airship slides away from the platform, widening the gap to 15 feet. At initiative count 0 in the seventh round, the airship departs.

How the PCs perform in this encounter determines which encounter occurs next. If they get aboard *Cloud's Destiny*, they start looking for Lucan in "Aboard



Cloud's Destiny Airship

Cloud's Destiny," below. If they didn't get aboard *Cloud's Destiny*, they find unexpected help in the "Need a Ride?" encounter.

Aboard Cloud's Destiny

If the PCs make it aboard *Cloud's Destiny* before it pulls away from the docking tower, they next must convince the ship's captain that they are paying passengers (see "Paying the Fare," below). Once that detail is taken care of, they can try to locate Lucan (and Grilsha, if she's still traveling with her brother).

The Situation: Lucan and Grilsha (the rest of this encounter is written presuming that she is still aiding her brother; adjust accordingly if she has fallen out of the adventure at this point) arrived aboard *Cloud's Destiny* a half-hour to an hour ahead of the PCs. Lucan *dominated* the gnomes on the dock, then presented himself to the ship's captain, utilizing the traveling papers and the code word provided by Neya. Then Lucan *dominated* the captain, getting him to provide Lucan with a secure hiding place and then ordering him to forget that he had such a hiding place. Lucan also made the captain forget that they had ever met.

The Hiding Place: The hiding place is the equivalent of a huge *bag of holding*. A locker on the cargo deck provides access to the nondimensional space where House Lyrandar can store cargo it would rather not have to pass through customs at any port of call. The locker is larger on the inside than on the outside, able to hold 15,000 pounds and a volume of up to 2,500 cubic feet. Object and creatures within the locker cannot be detected, so spells such as *locate object* or *detect undead* won't turn up either the *soul blade* or Lucan once they are inside and the locker is closed. An amazing lock (Open Lock DC 40) protects the door; Lucan took the only key from the captain. In addition, the locker's door and sides are made of iron (hardness 10, 60 hp, break DC 28).

Grilsha, meanwhile, disguises herself as a middle-aged human woman with the aid of a *disguise self* spell. She has a Disguise modifier of +11, and attempts to avoid unnecessary contact with either the crew or the other passengers.

Paying the Fare

The PCs board *Cloud's Destiny* without letters of passage or authorized traveling papers. The papers provided to them by Viorr can help, and the letter of credit can be used to pay their fare, but they still have to deal with an unsympathetic captain.

Captain Morgis, a tough half-elf with a gruff personality, demands to know what the characters think they're doing leaping onto his ship without letter of passage or permission.

Morgis has no orders from Lucan concerning the PCs; the vampire didn't have time to cover every contingency with the half-elf captain. Still, Morgis has an unfriendly attitude toward the PCs, and it takes a DC 25 Diplomacy check to convince him not to throw them overboard. (The PCs can get a +1 circumstance bonus for every 250 gp they add as a bribe to get on the captain's good side. The letter of credit can't be used in this fashion; the PCs must use their own money.)

SEARCHING THE AIRSHIP

Cloud's Destiny's captain and crew won't let the PCs search the airship from top to bottom. The characters have to invent a clever ruse—probably accompanied by *charm* spells, Bluff checks, and other tricks—to look into guest quarters and nonpublic parts of the airship.

Development: An interesting cat-and-mouse game can develop, with the PCs searching for Lucan and Grilsha. Lucan won't emerge from the nondimensional cargo hold inside the locker, but the characters can encounter Grilsha (if she's still present) over the course of the trip.

None of the other passengers or crew knows anything about Lucan, who came aboard the ship in disguise and immediately went to deal with the captain. If the PCs try to alarm the captain by revealing that Lucan is a vampire (provided they've figured that out by now), Captain Morgis doesn't blink. "As long as he's paid his fare and isn't feasting on my crew, what do I care what type of creature he is?" Morgis declares.

Continue the search of the airship for as long as it's fun for everyone at the table. Whenever you want, just say that time passes. About twenty-five hours after the airship leaves Trolanport, an attack occurs. Go to "Sky Raiders to Starboard," below.

NEED A RIDE?

If the PCs weren't able to board *Cloud's Destiny* before it departed for the docking tower, use this encounter to get them back on Lucan's trail. Right after *Cloud's Destiny* leaves its berth, the PCs must contend with the *dominated* gnomes who serve as Lucan's minions. The gnomes (see "Final Boarding Call") fight until they are incapacitated or killed, or until the PCs leave Docking Berth 3.

This encounter provides the PCs with another mode of transportation in the form of a privateer airship called *Jade's Fury*. While the vessel might look like an innocuous, privately owned airship, it is really disguised and in the service of the Order of the Emerald Claw. This fanatical organization, bent on increasing its power through magic and eventually dominating the world, wants to capture Lucan and the *soul blade* for its own nefarious purposes. The Order of the Emerald Claw takes great pains to maintain secrecy, so the PCs should not be able to easily or quickly see through the disguise.

As the PCs finish the battle with Lucan's minions, a privateer airship slides up to the docking tower. Read:

Suddenly an elemental airship rises from below the docking berth to hover alongside the platform. At first, it looks as though Cloud's Destiny has returned. Then you notice that this airship has massive gouges along its hull, a hole near the stern, and a broken shaft at the tip of the prow. Faded paint along the bow proclaims that this vessel's name is Jade's Fury. A thin, disheveled half-elf appears at the side and tosses a rope to you. "If you want to catch that ship, climb aboard!" he calls.

The Situation: A half-elf who calls himself Captain Rarwog is the owner and operator of *Jade's Fury*. In reality, he's the changeling named Garrow, a commander in the Order of the Emerald Claw. His disguise is flawless, especially since the last time the PCs met Garrow (if you ran *Shadows of the Last War*) they saw him in his vampire disguise. See the Appendix for Garrow's statistics.

The PCs have a simple choice here. They can accept aid from the privateer, or they can ignore him and figure out their own way to follow Lucan. Garrow, for his part, wants the PCs to accompany him. That way, he gets to try to find out what they know about his two current projects for his masters in the Emerald Claw—his search for the House Cannith schemas and his hunt to capture Lucan and the *soul blade*.

Obviously, the plot demands that the PCs resume their tracking of Lucan. Garrow is willing to help them in this in order to promote his own agenda. If the PCs refuse, they have to find their own method of transportation. In that case, pick up the adventure when they come upon the *Cloud's Destiny* crash site near Sterngate.

If they do accept "Captain Rarwog's" offer, the PCs climb aboard a ship that looks pretty much like a beat-up, less cared for version of *Cloud's Destiny*. Instead of a fire elemental bound to the ship to provide power, *Jade's Fury* uses an air elemental.

Garrow and his crew appear to be a band of ragtag privateers, similar to a dozen or more such groups that operate on the fringes of society. There are no other passengers on board. The crew won't engage the PCs in conversation, and even "Captain Rarwog" remains aloof and distant for much of the trip. They won't do anything to let their disguises slip or their true identities be revealed.

Garrow's Story: In the guise of Captain Rarwog, a half-elf scoundrel with a bad sense of humor and an adventurer's disposition, Garrow explains that he has been sent by Ambassador Neya ir'Krell to aid the PCs. "The good ambassador had a change of heart," Garrow tells them. "She was afraid you wouldn't get aboard *Cloud's Destiny* in time, and it appears she was correct. So me and my crew are here to give you a lift. Hop aboard and don't touch anything."

This is all a lie, of course. Neya has no connection to Garrow or his Rarwog persona. But this is a story that Garrow believes the PCs might accept, so he sells it with all the gusto he can manage.

A few hours into the trip, when *Jade's Fury* gets close enough to see *Cloud's Destiny* in the distance, Garrow once again engages the PCs in conversation. He wants to see what he can get them to tell him about their connection to House Cannith and Lady Elaydren, the schemas they recovered and where they are at the moment, and then whatever he can get them to reveal about Lucan and the *soul blade*. Garrow is cagey and very smart. He attempts to learn these things by asking innocent questions and showing a genuine interest in the exploits the PCs have engaged in. If they become hostile or suspicious, he apologizes and excuses himself. "I do have an airship to fly," he says with a lopsided grin.

Development: About twenty-five hours into the journey, as the airship passes the eastern cliffs of the Howling Peaks, Garrow orders an increase to battle speed, and *Jade's Fury* closes on *Cloud's Destiny*. He then orders the PCs to get into the small skiff he has moored to the prow of his airship. It has a crew of two, in addition to space for the PCs. "Get in," Garrow shouts. "They'll take you over to *Cloud's Destiny*."

"Captain Rarwog" is true to his word. His men fly the PCs over to the other airship, pulling low and alongside it so as not to attract the attention of its crew. One of the men tosses a grapple and line that catches on the deck. "Climb," he says, offering the PCs a way to get aboard *Cloud's Destiny*. Since it is dark and few of the House Lyrandar crew are on deck, the PCs can quietly slip aboard. That's when the next big scene begins.

Go to "Sky Raiders to Starboard!"

Sky Raiders to Starboard! (EL variable)

This set-piece battle pits minions of the Emerald Claw against the PCs and the crew of *Cloud's Destiny*. If the PCs didn't get on the airship in Trolanport, use the "Need a Ride?" encounter to get them aboard the airship just in time for the big battle. Otherwise, the PCs don't catch up with *Cloud's Destiny* until after the airship has crashed. In that case, skip this encounter and go to Part Four.

This encounter takes place in the sky to the west of Sterngate, near the Zilargo–Breland border. When Garrow's airship, *Jade's Fury*, pulls close to *Cloud's Destiny*, he opens the lower hull hatches and releases four skiffs full of soldiers of the Emerald Claw. The Order of the Emerald Claw wants Lucan and the *soul blade*, and Garrow will do almost anything to accomplish this mission for his masters.

Other features of this encounter are described below.

Light: Night; *everbright lanterns* on the airships and skiffs provide bright illumination in some areas.

Sound: The PCs can automatically hear the fiery rumble of the elementals bound to the airships.

Reaction: Once the crew becomes aware of the attack on *Cloud's Destiny*, they rush to defend the airship.

Important Rules: Tactical Aerial Movement, *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 20; Ballista, *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 100.

Use the map of *Cloud's Destiny*, printed on the inside cover, when running this encounter.

When you are ready to launch into this battle, read:

Three air-skiffs bear down on Cloud's Destiny. These small, eight-person vessels are made of soarwood but don't have bound elementals to provide speed. They are basically short-range craft. In the distance, you can see the large airship that carried the skiffs. A fourth skiff keeps its distance, its occupants firing arrows at the House Lyrandar crew.

Just then a deck hand cries out, "Sky raiders to starboard, Captain!"

The captain emerges from his quarters. "Battle stations, everyone!" he bellows, "Passengers get below decks!"

The Situation: This complex battle involves lots of NPCs, but you don't need to worry about most of them. Stay focused on the PCs and the action occurring around them. Every so often, let them know how the rest of the battle is going, dramatically describing the death of one crewmember or the heroic actions of another.

The three skiffs swoop in and disgorge Emerald Claw soldiers onto the upper deck of *Cloud's Destiny*, at the locations marked on the map. The soldiers on the fourth skiff fire their bows at range, focusing on uniformed crewmembers until someone starts shooting back at them.

The PCs have to deal with the soldiers in the three boarding parties, the archers in the fourth skiff, the panicked passengers aboard their airship, and the mounting casualties among the airship's crew. As DM, you have an extensive menu of interesting challenges you can throw at the PCs. Pace the battle so that the PCs are always on the verge of being overwhelmed, but the situation isn't totally hopeless. These various challenges are detailed below.

JADE'S FURY

The large airship remains close to the battle but never engages in direct combat. Garrow leads his troops from aboard the airship, staying close in case his direct intervention becomes necessary.

At the end of this scene, depending on how the boarding action turns out, Garrow uses *Jade's Fury* as a battering ram to disable the House Lyrandar airship.

Garrow, Emerald Claw Commander: hp 32; see Appendix.

BOARDING PARTIES

Three skiffs pull alongside *Cloud's Destiny* and board the vessel at the spots marked on the map. Each skiff contains six Emerald Claw soldiers and two skiff crewmembers that remain on their crafts. The soldiers in the boarding parties slay anyone in their path as they search for Lucan and the *soul blade*. Each six-member boarding party contains five soldiers and a leader.

Boarding Party Tactics: The first group to board the airship engages as many people on deck as possible,

preferring to attack uniformed crewmembers. The second group heads belowdecks as soon as they can. The third group attacks anyone they can find on the aft superstructure of the vessel.

After the soldiers board the airship, the skiffs that carried them move off and return to *Jade's Fury*. Garrow might send them back to collect the soldiers, depending on the outcome of the battle.

The soldiers have a description of Lucan, and they know he's a vampire. They have orders to capture Lucan if possible, but the Order of the Emerald Claw is more interested in the *soul blade* than in the intelligence it can gain from the former Citadel agent.

Against all others aboard the airship, the Emerald Claw soldiers simply attack with their flails, taking the time to make coup de grace attacks against fallen foes because Garrow's orders ended with a terse "No witnesses." If any Emerald Claw soldiers reach the elemental chamber, they attempt to free the bound elemental in order to disable the vessel.

Badly wounded or outmatched Emerald Claw soldiers retreat to the main deck of the airship, hoping that the skiffs will return to rescue them.

Emerald Claw Soldiers: Human warrior 2; CR 1; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8+2 plus 3; hp 14; Init +0; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 17, touch 10, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk or Full Atk +3 melee (1d8+1, flail) or +2 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +0, Will +0; Str 13, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 9, Wis 10, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +0, Ride +4; Power Attack, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Chainmail, heavy wooden shield, flail, light crossbow with 20 bolts, sunrod, tabard, wooden stake, pouch with 2d6 silver pieces and 1d8 gold pieces, identification papers (two sets, one false).

Emerald Claw Squad Leader: Human fighter 3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+3 plus 3; hp 25; Init +5; Spd 20 ft. (base 30 ft.); AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 17; Base Atk +3; Grp +5; Atk or Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+2, flail) or +4 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 12, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Intimidate +3, Knowledge (religion) +0, Ride +4; Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Improved Initiative, Power Attack, Toughness.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Chainmail, heavy wooden shield, flail, light crossbow with 20 bolts, sunrod, tabard, wooden stake, pouch with 2d8 silver pieces and 1d12 gold pieces, identification papers (two sets, one false).

SKIFF ARCHERS

Six archers and two crewmembers are aboard the fourth skiff. It maintains a distance of 30 feet from *Cloud's Destiny*, circling the airship. The archers fire at those aboard the airship, targeting crewmembers wearing the colors of House Lyrandar. If the opportunity presents itself, an archer takes a shot at one of the PCs engaged in combat with the Emerald Claw soldiers. Once the archers use up all their arrows, the skiff returns to *Jade's Fury*.

Emerald Claw Archers: Human ranger 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d8+2; hp 11; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 13; Base Atk +2; Grp +3; Atk +3 melee (1d8+1, longsword) or +6 ranged (1d8+1/3, masterwork composite longbow); Full Atk +3 melee (1d8+1, longsword) or +4/+4 ranged (1d8+1/3, masterwork composite longbow); SA favored enemy elves +2; SQ combat style (archery), wild empathy +1 (–3 magical beasts); AL LE; SV Fort +4, Ref +6, Will +1; Str 12, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 8, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Balance +8, Climb +6, Jump +6, Ride +8, Spot +6; Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot, Rapid Shot.

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Ring of feather fall, masterwork composite longbow (+1 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, longsword, masterwork studded leather.

ON CLOUD'S DESTINY

Since this attack occurs at night, none of the other passengers are on deck for the fight. The passengers do panic, however, and make a lot of noise belowdecks. If the Emerald Claw soldiers move belowdecks to search for Lucan, they have no qualms about slaughtering any passengers that can't or won't get out of their way.

Airship Crew (12): Half-elf magewright 1; CR 1/2; Medium humanoid (elf); HD 1d4+1; hp 5; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 11, touch 11, flat-footed 10; Base Atk +0; Grp +0; Atk or Full Atk +0 melee (1d6, club) or +2 ranged (1d8/19–20, masterwork light crossbow); SQ half-elf traits; AL N; SV Fort +1, Ref +3, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Listen +4, Profession (airship sailor) +6, Spellcraft +6, Use Rope +3; Lightning Reflexes, Spell Mastery.

Magewright Spells Prepared (3/2): 0—*mage hand* (3); 1st—*animate rope* (2).

Possessions: Club, masterwork light crossbow with 10 bolts, *potion of feather fall.*

Airship Crew Tactics: The airship crew repels the boarders as well as they can, but don't play out their attacks unless they have an immediate impact on something a PC is doing. If the PCs weren't there, the airship crew would fight bravely but would soon succumb to the boarders and the ranged attacks from the skiffs. You might never make a roll for a member of the airship crew. But if one of the PCs is sorely pressed, a small cluster of crewmembers might provide sufficient distraction to give the PC an escape route or enough respite to quaff a potion or cast a spell.

Captain Morgis: Half-elf fighter 3; CR 3; Medium humanoid; HD 3d10+3; hp 20; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 13, touch 11, flat-footed 12; Base Atk +3; Grp +4; Atk or Full Atk +5 melee (1d6+1/19–20, short sword) or +4 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SQ half-elf traits; AL NG; SV Fort +4, Ref +2, Will +2; Str 12, Dex 13, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 11.

Skills and Feats: Climb +7, Intimidate +6, Listen +3, Knowledge (geography) +4, Spot +3; Alertness, Least Dragonmark (House Lyrandar, *gust of wind* 1/day), Weapon Focus (short sword).

Languages: Common, elf.

Possessions: Leather armor, light crossbow with 10 bolts, short sword.

Captain Morgis Tactics: Captain Morgis loves his airship like nothing else in the world, and he stops at nothing to repel boarders from it. Heedless of personal danger, he charges headlong into battle against the Emerald Claw soldiers. (While this isn't the smartest plan, it does make the crash landing in the next encounter more likely if Morgis is wounded or killed.) Only if the PCs restrain him will Morgis forego making melee attacks against the invaders.

Lucan and Grilsha Tactics: Grilsha waits a few rounds before dropping her disguise and laying into the Emerald Claw soldiers or the PCs—whoever is closer. Lucan doesn't emerge from his hiding place until near the end of the battle, either as the airship plummets from the sky or after it crashes in the next scene.

Development: This encounter works best if you provide a steady stream of opponents for the PCs to deal with while describing the larger battle in evocative but general terms. Unlike most fights, this one may go on for dozens of rounds. That's okay, although you should give the PCs occasional lapses in opponents lasting a round or two so that they can heal, plan their next move, and so on.

Here's one way it might play out. The PCs defeat Emerald Claw soldiers on the deck in four rounds, then trade shots with the skiff-board archers for a few rounds. Then they hunker down for a round or two before heading belowdecks to root out Emerald Claw soldiers and save the passengers.

Here are some techniques the PCs might try during this encounter.

Commandeer a Skiff: The skiff crewmembers are no match for the PCs, but they know this and won't bring the skiffs closer than 30 feet from the upper deck of the airship. To commandeer a skiff, the PCs have to use magic to entice the skiff crew closer, or employ *fly*, *jump*, or *dimension door* to get over to the skiff.

Once the PCs have reached a skiff and eliminated resistance from the crew, it takes a move action and a DC 15 Profession (airship sailor) check to operate the skiff. A successful check lets a character turn the skiff up to 90 degrees per round, move it up to 150 feet straight ahead, or have it ascend or descend by up to 50 feet.

Push a Foe off the Deck: A bull rush attempt suffices to push someone off the airship's upper deck. The presence of the rail around the upper deck gives the defender a +2 bonus on the opposed check to avoid being bull rushed.

Characters who start falling have 3 rounds to save themselves, usually by casting a spell, before they hit the ground and take 20d6 points of damage.

Shoot a Ballista: The airships have autoloading mechanisms attached to the ballistas. This feature doesn't make reloading a ballista completely automatic, but it does speed the process. It takes a full-round action to reload one of an airship's three ballistas. The weapons otherwise function as described on page 100 of the *Dungeon Master's Guide*.

Fly the Airship: It takes a move action and a successful DC 15 Profession (airship sailor) check to operate the airship. A successful check made lets the character turn the airship up to 45 degrees per round, move it up to 200 feet straight ahead, or have it ascend or descend by up to 50 feet. This won't work for more than a round or two, because the bound fire elemental that provides lift and thrust for the airship resists orders from anyone without a House Lyrandar dragonmark.

Experience: Award the PCs full experience for foes they defeat by themselves. The characters earn 10% less XP than they otherwise would for overcoming foes that the airship crewmembers or Captain Morgis help them defeat.

Crash Landing (EL 6)

This encounter consists of three parts. First, Lucan appears on the deck of the airship. Second, Garrow, spotting the vampire and fearful that he will escape, orders *Jade's Fury* to ram *Cloud's Destiny*. Third, rammed and extremely damaged, *Cloud's Destiny* begins to fall from the sky.

LUCAN APPEARS

At some point during the boarding actions and the battles that result from them, you must decide when you want Lucan to emerge from his nondimensional hiding place. When this event occurs, it triggers the final moments of this part of the adventure. Don't have Lucan appear too early; wait until the PCs have dealt with most of the invading Emerald Claw soldiers.

If the PCs have gone belowdecks to help the passengers, they can witness Lucan's appearance. Read:

One of the lockers that line the corridor walls suddenly glows with a discharge of arcane energy. As the glow dims, the locker door swings open. Lucan steps from the locker, glances at you, and then turns into a thin, gray mist that rises and seeps through a space in the decking above.

If the PCs follow the mist to the airship's main deck, or if they are on the deck when Lucan appears, read:

Gray mist rises from a space between the deck planks, thickening and taking the form of a man. In a moment, the mist solidifies, and Lucan stands upon the main deck.

Lucan looks around, quickly sizing up the situation. He has the *soul blade* strapped to his side. He ignores Grilsha if she is still alive and on the airship. She knows his plans and must fend for herself now. If any of the PCs are nearby, Lucan exchanges attacks for a couple of rounds as he moves toward the railing.

RAMMING SPEED

Shortly after Lucan appears on the deck of *Cloud's Destiny*, Garrow spots him. Furious that his men have not yet captured the *soul blade* and fearful that Lucan will escape, Garrow increases the speed of *Jade's Fury* and sets in on a collision course with the House Lyrandar airship.

Let the PCs make DC 15 Spot checks to notice the fast-approaching airship. If any characters notice the airship coming straight for them, they have 2 rounds to prepare before the ships collide. If none of the PCs succeed on the Spot check, they continue with whatever actions they have been participating in. At his initiative count in the second round, Lucan uses a standard action to once again take on gaseous form. At initiative count 0 in that round, *Jade's Fury* rams *Cloud's Destiny*. Read:

Wood buckles and cracks as the two airships collide. Your vessel shakes and shudders violently as the bow pitches downward. The sound of shattering deck planks and splitting rigging explodes into the night. As the ships merge in ways no builder ever imagined, the elemental binding housings rip apart. In addition to the terrible damage inflicted by the colliding vessels, now each ship's elemental—one fire, one air—emerge to battle amid the disintegrating vessels that once held them.

The PCs must make DC 20 Balance checks or get thrown to the split and cracking deck beneath them. Those who fail take 1d6 points of damage. Those who succeed maintain their footing and grab hold of something more or less stable as the airship rocks and begins to fall from the sky. Just as the disaster occurs, Lucan, in gaseous form, floats away from the two airships.

Between the damage inflicted on both ships in the crash and the damage being caused by the two warring elementals, both vessels are going down. What the PCs do next determines how much damage they take in the imminent collision with the ground.

FALL FROM THE SKY

Have the PCs roll initiative so you can keep close track of time. Have each player point out exactly where on the ship his or her character is. The airships hit the ground at initiative count 0 in the fourth round thereafter. When they hit, the crash deals 12d6 points of damage to each individual aboard unless the PCs can somehow slow the descent.

The PCs can attempt to commandeer a skiff. (The skiffs are very slow, capable of traveling only 2 miles per hour.) They can use whatever magic is available to them to attempt to protect themselves or the falling ships. They can enter the nondimensional space where Lucan had been hiding; it endures the crash without any harm coming to those within it.

In the end, the two airships smash to the ground. Both sustain such damage that neither will rise again without extensive repairs. Garrow slips away in the confusion; he always has a contingency plan for escaping. Lucan (and Grilsha, if she survives) also gets away.

The airships crash within sight of the fortress of Sterngate. This Brelish outpost has a lightning rail station. As luck would have it, a lightning rail coach heading north toward Thrane prepares to depart in the morning. The PCs can rest in the wilderness outside the fortress, or they can request that the gates be opened so they can make use of the fortress's inn.

Sterngate: The fortress-town protects the pass between Darguun and Breland, as well as serving as a way station for travelers going to or coming from Zilargo. The PCs can easily convince the guards to open the gates, even though it is well after dark, if they show the guards the traveling papers that Viorr provided them with in Sharn. In addition to the lightning rail station and an inn, the PCs can stock up on supplies and make use of the services of the resident House Jorasco healer. Any other survivors from *Cloud's Destiny* also make their way to Sterngate. The *Jade's Fury* survivors disappear into the night.

Part Four: Travel by Lightning Rail

This part of the adventure features a three-way battle aboard a lightning rail coach bound for Flamekeep, the capital city of Thrane. The coach follows the path of conductor stones from Sterngate to Starilaskur, onto Vathirond, and then north through Thrane toward Flamekeep. Lucan plans to be aboard the morning coach. To stay on his trail, the PCs must also make it aboard before the coach departs.

Among the various things the PCs do upon reaching Sterngate, including getting healed, resting, resupplying, and recovering spells, they see that a lightning rail coach is parked in the fortress-town's station. A few inquiries allow them to learn that the coach departs in the morning (some ten hours after they arrive in Sterngate) for Flamekeep and other locations to the north. In lieu of an airship, this is the fastest mode of travel for continuing on to Karrnath.

The lightning rail coach consists of a train of special-purpose carts. Two crew carts, one at the front and one at the rear, house the primary elemental bindings. Four passenger carts, two lounge carts, and two cargo carts make up the rest of the train.

Catching the Coach (EL 5)

After getting through the night in Sterngate, the PCs must be aboard the lightning rail coach before it departs in the morning. Lucan reached the station ahead of the PCs and was able to secure a private cabin on the coach.

The PCs must get on the lightning rail before it departs after the sun rises. To do that, they have to get past the surprises Lucan left for them on the station.

BATTLE ON STERNGATE PLATFORM

The platform where the lightning rail coach is parked is basically a rectangle 120 feet long and 40 feet wide. The middle two passenger carts (carts 5 and 6 on the Lightning Rail Coach map, printed on the inside cover) line up along the long edge of the platform, with additional carts stretching to each side. A set of boarding stairs between the two carts welcomes passengers from the platform onto the coach.

Lucan has left a few opponents to hinder the PCs. Two *dominated* House Orien human fighters (who normally serve as station guards) and two bat swarms provide the challenge in this encounter. In addition, the PCs don't have a lot of time to cross the platform before the lightning rail coach begins to move.

The Situation: As the PCs enter the station, Lucan spots them from his hiding place and commands the coach driver (whom he also *dominated*) to depart now. (He did not make the coach leave earlier than scheduled, since that would have raised questions with officials at stops all along the way.) Have everyone roll initiative. The human fighters and the bat swarms move to intercept the PCs. At initiative count 10 in each round, the lightning rail coach gets closer to leaving the station, as described below.

Dominated House Orien Guards (2): Male human fighter 2; CR 2; Medium humanoid; HD 2d10; hp 11, 13; Init +7; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 13, flat-footed 15; Base Atk +2; Grp +4; Atk or Full Atk +6 melee (2d4+3/18–20, masterwork falchion); AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 15, Dex 16, Con 11, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +5, Jump +5, Spot +3; Dodge, Improved Initiative, Mobility, Weapon Focus (falchion).

Possessions: Masterwork breastplate, masterwork falchion.

Bat Swarm (2): hp 13 each; see *Monster Manual* page 237. The bat swarms begin play hidden in the rafters above the platform. The swarms swoop down on their turn in the first round of combat.

Lightning Rail Coach Timetable

Each round, on initiative count 10, the lightning rail coach acts.

Round 1: The coach begins to crackle with arcs of lightning.

Round 2: The coach lifts slightly higher into the air as the power between the conductor stones on the ground and in the belly of the coach's carts intensifies.

Round 3: The coach begins to move, so that carts 5 and 6 now line up with the platform.

Round 4: The coach continues its slow departure from the station; carts 6 and 7 line up with the platform.

Round 5: The coach continues its slow departure from the station; carts 8 and 9 line up with the platform.

Round 6: The coach continues to move. In this round, cart 10 slides alongside the platform. This is the last round in which the PCs can leap aboard the coach before it departs the station and increases to its normal travel speed.

Development: Starting in round 3, each PC must make a DC 5 Jump check to leap onto the moving coach and a DC 8 Dexterity check to hang on. Failing either check sends the character crashing to the platform (1d6 points of damage, Reflex DC 15 half).

In round 6, the DCs increase to 8 for the Jump check and 12 for the Dexterity check. Characters already on the coach can use the aid another action to assist with the Dexterity check. After round 6, the lightning rail coach increases to its cruising speed of 30 miles per hour. If the PCs didn't get aboard, they'll have to figure out a way to catch the coach somewhere along its path.

Ride the Lightning (EL variable)

It takes thirteen hours for the lightning rail coach to reach its first stop in the city of Starilaskur. The layover is brief—three hours to allow passengers to leave and board the coach, and to take on supplies and drop off

cargo. The next leg of the trip also takes thirteen hours; then the coach spends another three hours in Vathirond before leaving Breland and entering the nation of Thrane. The attack at the heart of this encounter occurs three hours after the coach departs Vathirond, about two hours after dark on the second day of travel.

Along the way, Lucan remains in hiding. The walls of all the private cabins within the passenger carts are lined with a thin sheet of lead to protect passengers from spells such as *locate object* (and, in Lucan's case, *detect undead*). The walls of the cargo carts and many of the cargo containers have the same protection. House Orien believes that privacy must be protected at all costs. The *dominated* cargo driver visits Lucan's cabin once during each leg of the trip; Lucan feeds on a small amount of the driver's blood during each of these visits.

The coach's crew won't allow the PCs to barge into private cabins, and House Orien doesn't answer to Breland's king, so the traveling papers the PCs carry have little weight in this area. The best they can do is interact with the passengers and crew and bide their time, waiting for Lucan to show himself or make some kind of mistake.

Shortly after the coach departs the Vathirond station, early in the evening of the second day of travel, the PCs' past actions catch up with them. An agent of the Lord of Blades, still tracking the PCs in hopes of recovering the schemas used in the Xen'drik creation pattern, attacks the lightning rail. That's when things get interesting.

If the PCs didn't participate in either of the previous adventures (*The Forgotten Forge* or *Shadows of the Last War*), then this is merely a case of mistaken identity. Of course, convincing the warforged of that is nearly impossible.

Important Rules: Bull Rush, *Player's Handbook* page 154.

Use the map of the Lightning Rail Coach, located on the inside cover, when running this encounter.

WHEN THE ATTACK BEGINS

You can play out some of the investigation and interaction with passengers and crew. You can even allow the PCs to take care of business in either Starilaskur or Vathirond during the brief stops in those cities. The heart of this encounter, however, is the attack by the warforged. Fast-forward through the travel to this point as slowly or as quickly as you and your players are comfortable with. Cut to the highlights and play out a few representative scenes along the way.

This encounter can begin in two ways. If a PC is keeping watch somehow—probably from the back of the last cart, he or she sees warforged board the coach. But if all the PCs are resting or relaxing, the attack comes

Lightning Rail Station in Sterngate

as a surprise. Determine where each of the PCs are aboard the coach after night falls during the trip from Vathirond to Aruldusk.

If the PCs have someone watching outside, read:

As the elemental-powered coach labors a bit to climb a low rise, you see figures in bulky cloaks on horses galloping alongside. Then the cloaked figures leap from their horses to the sideboards on the carts. Some board the forward crew cart, while others board at the rear crew cart. Then, a half-dozen creatures swoop out of the sky, each bearing a small rider.

If the PCs aren't paying attention to what's going on outside, read:

A commotion in the cart toward the rear of the coach interrupts the relaxing sway of the speeding lightning rail. Through the passageway, you see a cloaked figure with a longsword at the throat of a passenger—an elderly human woman who appears frightened almost to the point of panic. Before you can react, a fierce-looking halfling on a winged creature soars past the window of the cart you're in.

The cloaked figures are warforged agents of the Lord of Blades. The warforged have descriptions of the PCs and are systematically searching the coach for them. They don't know or care about Lucan, though they'd be happy to secure the *soul blade* for their master should the opportunity arise.

The Situation: Nine warforged have boarded the coach. Four of them work to secure the forward crew cart and stop the coach. Five, including the lead agent known as Scimitar, have dealt with anyone in the rear crew cart and have begun working their way forward, searching for the PCs and dealing with potential threats along the way. They plan to halt the coach and make a thorough search of every cart until they have captured the PCs.

Outside, six halfling mercenaries ride glidewings and watch for anyone other than the warforged attempting to leave the coach. They have orders to attack anyone outside the coach who isn't a warforged.

Creatures: Two groups of warforged, four in the forward crew cart and five searching the other carts from rear to front. Their leader, Scimitar, commands the latter group. Six halfling mercenaries on glidewings patrol outside the coach. Lucan (and Grilsha, if she is still with him) remains in hiding until the opportunity to escape presents itself (see Ending the Encounter). Lucan and Grilsha's statistics can be found in the Appendix at the end of this adventure.

Scimitar: Female personality warforged fighter 5; CR 5; Medium living construct; HD 5d10+5; hp 42; Init +2; Spd 20 ft.; AC 19, touch 12, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +5; Grp +9; Atk or Full Atk +11 melee (1d6+5/18–20, *+1 scimitar*) or +7 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SQ damage reduction 2/adamantine, warforged traits; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +0; Str 18, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 8, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +8, Intimidate +7, Jump +8; Adamantine Body, Cleave, Improved Bull Rush, Power Attack, Weapon Focus (scimitar).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: +1 scimitar, potion of repair moderate damage, light crossbow with 10 crossbow bolts, traveling cloak.

Warforged Traits (Ex): Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, effects that cause the sickened condition, and energy drain.

Scimitar

Rear Warforged Boarders (4): Male personality warforged fighters 1; CR 1; Medium living construct; HD 1d10+2; hp 7, 8, 10, 12; Init +1; Spd 20 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 18; Base Atk +1; Grp +3; Atk or Full Atk +5 melee (1d8+2/19–20, masterwork longsword) or +2 ranged (1d8+2/×3, composite longbow); SQ damage reduction 2/adamantine, warforged traits; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +1, Will –2; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 10, Cha 6.

Skills and Feats: Climb +1, Jump +1; Adamantine Body, Weapon Focus (longsword).

Languages: Common.

Possessions: Masterwork longsword, composite longbow (+2 Str bonus) with 20 arrows, traveling cloak, *potion of repair light damage.*

Warforged Traits (Ex): Immunity to poison, sleep effects, paralysis, disease, nausea, fatigue, exhaustion, effects that cause the sickened condition, and energy drain.

Forward Warforged Boarders (4): hp 6, 7, 8, 10; same statistics as above.

Warforged Tactics: The two groups of warforged are unsubtle opponents, although they're smart enough to try to push foes off the lightning rail with a bull rush attempt if the opportunity arises. The Lord of Blades has filled their minds with propaganda, so they fight to the death to promote his cause.

The warforged who boarded the forward crew cart subdue the crew there and order the coach driver to stop the lightning rail. He refuses. Refer to Ending the Encounter for the results of this interaction.

Scimitar is a trusted agent of the Lord of Blades. She demands that the PCs surrender and provide her with either the schemas or information on where she can find them. If the PCs don't cooperate, she has orders to kill all but one of them. The survivor will be taken for further questioning by the Lord of Blades himself.

Unlike the other warforged, Scimitar has a strong sense of self-preservation. She retreats if her life is at risk or if the mission looks doomed to failure.

Glidewing Riders (6): Male and female halfling barbarian 2; CR 2; Small humanoid; HD 2d12+2; hp 17 each; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 19, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +2; Grp –1; Atk or Full Atk +4 melee (1d6+1/3, lance) or +3 melee (1d6+1/19–20, longsword) or +5 ranged (1d4+1, javelin); SA rage 1/day; SQ uncanny dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 16, Con 13, Int 10, Wis 12, Cha 8.

Skills and Feats: Climb +6, Handle Animal +4, Listen +6, Ride +8; Mounted Combat.

Possessions: +1 studded leather, masterwork light wooden shield, masterwork lance, longsword, 5 javelins.

Glidewings (6): hp 22 each; *Eberron Campaign Setting,* page 280.

Halfling Tactics: The halflings and glidewings are content to circle the lightning rail coach, but they fling javelins at any creature on the roof or side running boards of the carts, circling so they remain about 30 feet away from their targets. If a few rounds of javelin barrages aren't effective, the halfings swoop close to the coach and charge with their lances. If a halfling falls in battle, the remaining halflings concentrate on the PC who dealt the killing blow. They rage at this point, jumping onto the coach to attack the PCs directly.

The halflings, being hired help, flee if the battle doesn't go easily. A raging halfling won't retreat before his or her rage ends, however.

Development: This is a set-piece battle, so there's a lot going on. You have four groups of NPCs to keep track of, plus the "actions" of the moving coach. But not every group confronts the PCs at the same time, so don't worry about the actions of NPCs who are "offstage." Pace yourself as you provide threats one or two at a time. For example, perhaps the PCs fight Scimitar and her warforged party for a few rounds before Lucan appears. Then the PCs chase Lucan forward from cart to cart for a few rounds as the coach speeds up. Then Lucan takes to the roof and at least some PCs follow, bringing the halflings into the fray. The rest of the PCs encounter the other team of warforged just as the coach grinds to a halt. After the coach stops, the PCs finish off any surviving warforged and wonder where Lucan fled to.

At your gaming table, the easiest way to handle this combat is to treat the coach carts as stationary and move the terrain around it. With a fly speed of 80 feet, the halflings' glidewings are easily fast enough to keep up.

It's often difficult to keep track of events when a party splits up, but in this battle you can switch back and forth between PCs in different coach carts by simply cycling through the initiative order; imagine a movie that cuts between two tense situations.

PCs are generally adept at using their surroundings to advantage. Here are some clever tricks they might employ.

Climb onto the Roof: Hatches and ladders are located at the rear of each cart. It takes a move action to open the hatch. It's a DC 0 Climb check to get up the ladder, but it takes 40 feet of movement to do so. A DC 5 Climb check gets a character up the ladder with only 20 feet of movement. Unless PCs are unusually burdened, failure simply means no progress on the climb, not an actual fall.

Fall or Jump off the Coach: Treat this as a normal fall, except that it deals 2d6 points of damage due to the coach's forward speed. A character can reduce the damage to 1d6 points if he or she jumps down intentionally and succeeds on a DC 15 Jump check, or if he or she succeeds on a DC 15 Tumble check.

Push Someone Off: A bull rush attack suffices to push someone off the roof of the coach. Attempting to do so from the outer balconies is harder; the presence of the rail gives the defender a +2 bonus on the opposed check to avoid being bull rushed.

Grab at a Railing: If a character is falling off the coach for whatever reason, a DC 20 Climb check lets him grab onto a guardrail or similar protuberance. A character can pull himself back up to safety by taking a move action and making a DC 10 Climb check, but he's hanging by his fingertips until he does so.

ENDING THE ENCOUNTER

Four rounds into the battle, the driver increases the speed of the coach. In the fifth round, the warforged in the crew cart kill him, causing the coach to slide to a stop. (The coach won't run without the driver.) When the coach suddenly stops, each individual on board needs to make a DC 15 Balance check to remain standing. Failure indicates that the sudden stop sends the character crashing into a wall or the floor. Those inside a cart who fail take 1d6 points of damage. Those on the roof of a cart can make a second check to avoid falling off (see above).

Lucan emerges from hiding at this point. He jumps from the coach, takes the form of a dire wolf, and disappears into the night. Where is Lucan going? Toward the ruined ziggurat he sees in the distance.

Experience: Award the PCs full experience for each foe they defeat in combat, but don't award experience for Lucan's retreat or any halflings who simply fly away.

Part Five: Lucan's Last Stand

Lucan has struggled to take control over his destiny since becoming a vampire. First, he came under the thrall of the vampire lord Calderus. Then, the *soul blade* exerted influence over him. Now, with pursuers closing in on him, Lucan has temporarily asserted his will and taken control of himself. He doesn't know how long this will last, but he desperately wants to once again be in charge of his own fate.

Lucan didn't want to become a vampire. He didn't want to betray the Citadel. He certainly didn't want to go to Karnath. Now, in a moment of clear thought and lucidity, he has decided to cast off the orders of unseen masters and make his own stand in the Thrane wilderness.

After fleeing from the lightning rail coach, Lucan heads toward the ruins of an ancient goblin ziggurat. Here, the vampire prepares to battle the PCs who have been tracking him since Sharn.

The Ziggurat

A structure remaining from the height of the Dhakaani Empire, the ziggurat stands in a shallow depression on an otherwise featureless plain. Due to the rainy season, a lake has sprung up around the ziggurat and moisture has seeped into its lower levels.

Inside the ziggurat, walls are made of superior masonry (Climb DC 20) and the floors are flagstone. Ceilings in the rooms are 15 feet high unless otherwise specified. The few doors that exist are stone; they aren't locked, but they are stuck (Strength DC 28 to open, or hardness 8 and 60 hp if attacked directly). There's no natural light anywhere in the ziggurat, so the PCs have to provide illumination unless they all have darkvision.

Hallways and staircases between the chambers are 10 feet high and 10 feet wide. They have iron sconces every 40 feet for torches or lanterns, but the light sources themselves disappeared long ago.

This ziggurat was dedicated to an ancient fiend that was worshiped for a time in this part of the empire. Few goblinoids today remember, let alone venerate, this once-powerful entity. The place has a reputation for being haunted, and few brave this location.

Reaching the central stairs that lead to the ziggurat entrance requires crossing a quarter-mile-wide lake, which has an average depth of 10 feet. If the PCs are unwilling to swim the distance, they can use wood from a thin copse of trees nearby to make a 10-foot-by-10-foot raft. One character can do this work in twelve hours; if more than one PC participates, the time is reduced proportionately (so four PCs could build a raft in three hours).

Use the map of the ancient ziggurat, printed on the inside cover, when running these encounters. The chambers are presented in the probable order in which the PCs will encounter them.

Antechamber (EL 5)

The PCs reach a ziggurat that rises above a still lake. To start this part of the adventure, read:

Across the still water, an ancient temple rises into the night sky. The water surrounds it even as the night enfolds it. A stairway on the outside of the temple leads to a broad doorway that opens into darkness. Lucan appears in the doorway, staring across the lake in your direction. Then he steps into the shadows and disappears inside.

The PCs must cross the water and climb the stairs into the ziggurat's antechamber. This ancient temple may be abandoned, but it isn't uninhabited. The antechamber, for example, serves as the lair of a cloaker.

Other features of the antechamber are described below.

Light: None.

Sound: Once the cloaker reacts to the PCs, they automatically hear eerie moans without needing to make Listen checks.

Reaction: If the PCs have a light source or make a sound, the cloaker begins an unnerving moan attack. The cloaker has a Listen modifier of +13.

Important Rules: Fear, *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 294; *mirror image* spell, *Player's Handbook* page 254; Grapple, *Player's Handbook* page 155.

The Situation: Lucan steps into the temple and assumes gaseous form so he can circumnavigate the place without being molested by its inhabitants. The PCs aren't as fortunate. The cloaker in the antechamber uses its unnerving moan attack as soon as it notices the PCs.

When the PCs enter the temple, read:

The polished gray marble walls in this chamber feature wavy patterns reminiscent of the ocean. Two rows of columns stretch toward a doorway on the far side of the chamber, and each column has 8-inch-diameter discs raised along its surface, making the columns look like massive octopus tentacles.

The immediate effect of the unnerving moan (–2 penalty on attack rolls and damage rolls) doesn't allow saving throws. Describe how maddening and distracting the moan is, and tell the PCs that they feel like they won't be able to function if the sound continues much longer.

Have the PCs make Spot checks immediately; the cloaker is attached to one of the columns near the center of the room. The cloaker's Hide modifier is +8. If none of the PCs spot the cloaker and it knows where they are, the monster gets to act in the surprise round when the PCs step into the chamber.

Cloaker: hp 42; *Monster Manual* page 36.

Cloaker Tactics: Ideally, the cloaker uses its unnerving moan for 6 consecutive rounds, hoping to put PCs in a trance. If the PCs enter too quickly, the cloaker circles

near the ceiling and uses the dancing images version of its shadow shift ability. Then it uses the fear version of its moan ability, then the nausea version. Then it tries to engulf a PC who isn't nauseated or fleeing.

The cloaker flees—out of the ziggurat if possible—if reduced to 15 hit points or less. It uses the antechamber as a lair and usually hunts elsewhere.

OFFERTORY CHAMBER (EL 4)

This room was once used to collect tithes and offerings from the faithful. The ziggurat's priests are long gone, but they didn't disarm one of the traps designed to catch thieves. When the PCs reach the doorway, read:

A dais with a solid stone altar dominates this room. From the doorway, you can see a slot cut into the top of the altar. Along the walls, faded frescoes of leering, red-skinned demons face the door on the opposite side of the chamber. Dozens of small hooks are embedded in the ceiling. Thick chains run from each corner of the altar to the ceiling.

The hooks are unimportant; tapestries used to hang from them. The chains prevent the altar from falling when the trap is triggered.

Trap: If a character searches the altar, a result of 15 on the Search check reveals a drawer low on the back of the altar—but it takes a result of 25 to notice that the drawer latch is the trigger for a trap. If the PCs touch the latch and the trap hasn't been disabled, the eight squares surrounding the altar open trap doors that drop would-be thieves into a pit. The drawer is empty.

Pit Trap: CR 4; mechanical; touch trigger; manual reset; DC 20 Reflex save avoids; 40 ft. deep (4d6, fall); multiple targets (squares marked on map). Search DC 25; Disable Device DC 17.

ANIMAL SACRIFICE CHAMBER (EL 4)

Animal sacrifices were performed in this room—and one of the creatures that performed the sacrifices still resides here. When the PCs reach the doorway, read:

The stairs lead to another chamber, this one decorated with carved animal heads filling the walls. Many of the animal heads have emeralds for eyes, causing them to flicker green in the light. A stone table occupies the center of the chamber. Behind it stands a large creature with the head and horns of a bull. Its flesh is rotting away, and parts of its skeleton show through. It lifts its greataxe and steps toward you.

Minotaur Zombie: hp 81; *Monster Manual* page 267.

Minotaur Zombie Tactics: It's a zombie, so the minotaur's tactics are simple. It charges in the first round if it can, using its greataxe because it doesn't have a living minotaur's powerful charge ability. Then it just attacks the nearest creature with its greataxe every round until all its foes are slain or the zombie itself is destroyed. It won't leave the room, even to chase fleeing opponents.

Development: Beyond this room, the stairs leading deeper into the ziggurat split, with one staircase leading upward to the Chamber of Circles and Chamber of Ascension, and the other leading downward to the Hall of Statues, the Chamber of Prayer, and the Crypt.

Treasure: The emeralds in the wall carvings are large, but poorly cut and full of flaws (Appraise DC 15 to notice this). They're worth 5 gp each. One character can gather 1,000 gp worth of emeralds if he or she spends two hours prying them out of the carvings; if more than one PC participates, the time is reduced proportionately (so four PCs could do this work in 30 minutes).

HALL OF STATUES (EL 5)

If the PCs follow the staircase down, they reach a point where the stairs continue down and a hallway leads to another chamber—the Hall of Statues. Seeing humanoid statues often makes veteran D&D players worry about medusas and cockatrices. But sometimes a statue is just a statue, and the PCs instead have a straightforward fight with gricks here.

When the PCs reach the doorway, read or paraphrase the following:

Moss festoons this room, draping itself from large clumps in the ceiling and covering the walls in large patches. Statues, mostly of robed hobgoblins with a few armored bugbears, stand in clusters, almost as if they were conversing with each other. Each stands on its own pedestal. The air is moist here and smells fresher than elsewhere in the ziggurat.

Other features of the hall of statues are described below.

Light: None.

Sound: The PCs hear a faint drumming noise.

Reaction: None.

Important Rules: Squeezing Through, *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 29.

The Situation: Two gricks hide in the far corner of the room, near the gap in the wall that leads outside. They have a Hide modifier of +3; have the PCs make Spot checks as they enter the room. No Spot or Listen checks are necessary for the gricks if the PCs have a light source.

Gricks (2): hp 9, 10; *Monster Manual* page 139.

Grick Tactics: Each grick simply rushes, attacking the nearest two PCs. If a grick kills a PC or knocks one unconscious, it drags the body back to a rear corner of the room. Once there, it performs a coup de grace if necessary and starts eating.

If reduced to 3 hit points or less, a grick flees through the gap, trying to reach the relative safety of the lake.

Development: Anyone, PC or grick, in the narrow passage beyond the gap takes a –4 penalty on attack rolls and a –4 penalty to Armor Class.

CHAMBER OF PRAYER (EL 4)

The stairs descend to the lowest level of the ziggurat, opening into a chamber that was originally intended for individual prayer. The frayed tapestries hanging in the room once acted as screens to give worshipers privacy. Now the chamber houses an otyugh that lives off fungus and whatever wanders into its lair.

Other features of the prayer chamber are described below.

Light: None.

Sound: The PCs hear a loud drumming noise, the volume of which causes a –5 penalty on Listen checks.

Reaction: None.

Important Rules: Grapple, *Player's Handbook* page 155; Disease, *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 292.

When the PCs reach the chamber doorway, read:

Moss covers the walls of this chamber, some of it growing on tapestries hooked to the walls and ceiling. The moss is so thick that any designs on the tapestry are completely obscured. Murky water covers the floor of this room. The center of the opposite wall features a stone door with a crescent moon carved on its face. A dais on the side wall has a set of large kettle drums. A double-ended mallet floats above them, drumming of its own volition.

The Situation: The otyugh uses its sensory stalk to peer around the edge of one of the tapestries. It has a Hide modifier of +7. When the PCs reveal themselves, the creature immediately goes on the prowl for fresh meat.

Otyugh: hp 36; *Monster Manual* page 204.

Otyugh Tactics: The otyugh shuffles to within 15 feet of a PC, then uses improved grab to start a grapple with a PC and constrict him until he falls unconscious. Then it moves on to the next foe. This is its lair, so it fights until slain. Remember that the otyugh's bite can infect a target with filth fever.

Development: The room has 1 foot of standing water on the floor. It costs 2 squares of movement to enter any square in this room, and the DC of Tumble checks increases by 2.

The mallet is the target of an *animate objects* spell made permanent. It won't react to the PCs in any way. Anyone with ranks in Knowledge (religion) can make a DC 15 skill check to recognize a ceremonial beat similar to that used by modern-day goblinoids.

A secret door (Search DC 20 to locate) leads to a vertical shaft that connects this room to the Chamber of Ascension. An elf gets a Search check just for passing within 5 feet of a secret door, and a dwarf gets a +2 bonus because the doors are made of stone.

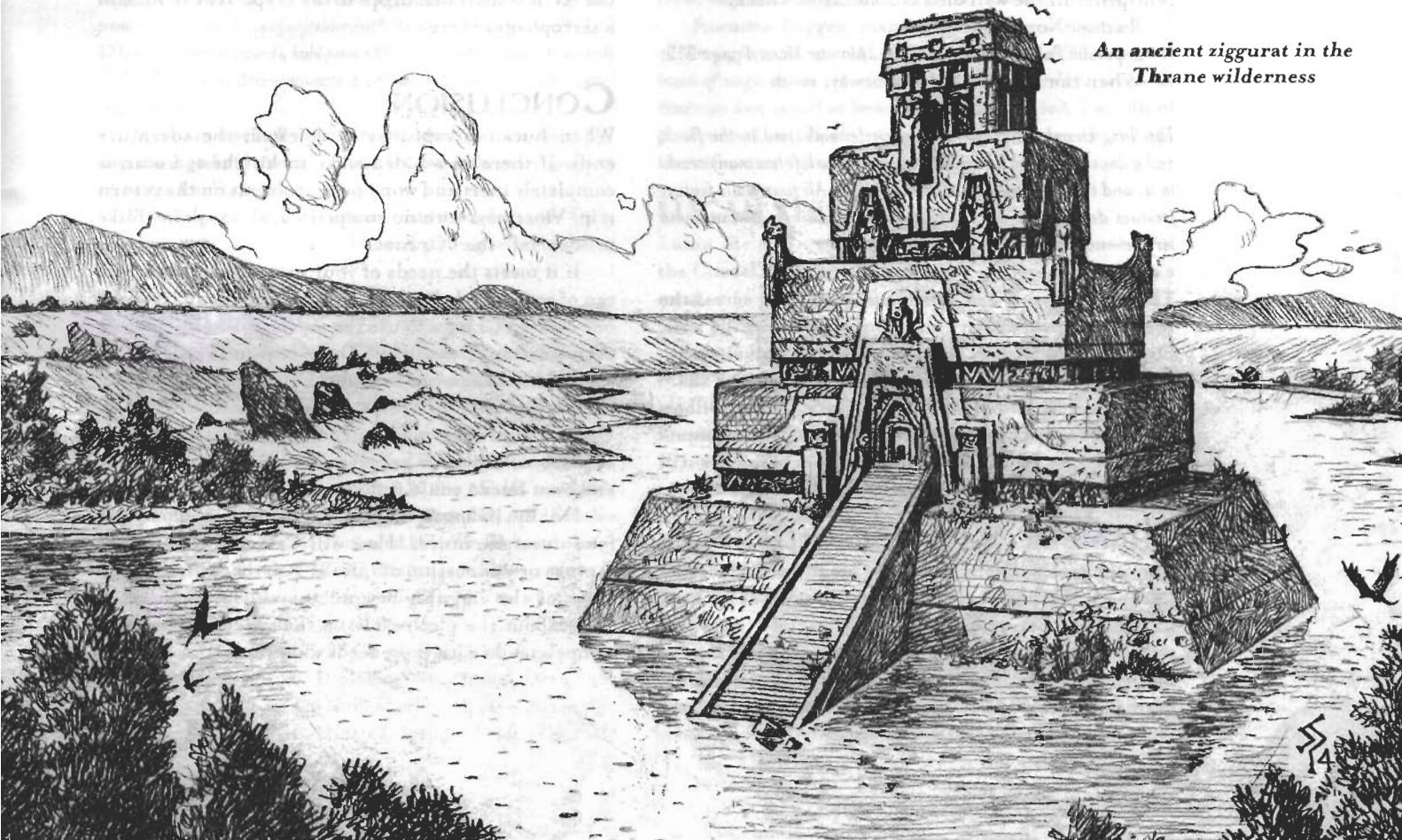
CRYPT (EL 5)

To get into this room, the PCs must open the stuck stone door. This requires a DC 28 Strength check; up to two PCs can try to open the door at the same time. Alternatively, the PCs can bash it down with weapons. The door has 60 hit points and hardness 8.

When the PCs get the door open, read:

Dozens of stone sarcophagi rise like islands from the murky water that fills this vast chamber. Each features a row of goblinoid skulls carved around the lid.

The Situation: This room also has standing water in it (2 squares of movement to enter each square and +2 to Tumble DCs). PCs can also jump from one sarcophagus lid to another if they like. The sarcophagus nearest the door has an ochre jelly in it. There's a crack in the



An ancient ziggurat in the Thrane wilderness

side of the sarcophagus big enough for the ochre jelly to move through.

Ochre Jelly: hp 69; *Monster Manual* page 202.

Ochre Jelly Tactics: The ochre jelly is a straightforward combatant; it is an ooze, after all. It just tries to use its improved grab and constrict abilities against whichever PC is most convenient. Remember that it splits into identical jellies if it's damaged by electricity or by a slashing or piercing weapon.

Development: Not every sarcophagus is occupied. If Lucan is reduced to 0 hit points, he uses an empty sarcophagus to rest in.

The PCs can pry open each of the sarcophagi to see if the goblinoid dead were buried with anything valuable. This work is time-consuming. Rather than play it out, just tell the PCs that it would take one character two hours to check all the sarcophagi for loot. (If more than one PC participates, the time is reduced proportionately, so four PCs could do this work in 30 minutes.)

Treasure: Four sarcophagi have valuables in them: a gem worth 400 gp; a *potion of levitate*; a masterwork cold iron longsword; and a *wand of color spray* (25 charges). The rest have only moldy bones or are empty.

CHAMBER OF CIRCLES (EL 4)

The stairs ascend to the Chamber of Circles. In this room, the PCs must deal with a swarm of centipedes before they can reach Lucan's hiding place.

Other features of the chamber are described below.

Light: None.

Sound: The PCs can hear faint scurrying from the centipedes in the wall on a DC 20 Listen check.

Reaction: None.

Important Rules: Swarm subtype, *Monster Manual* page 315.

When the PCs reach the doorway, read:

This long chamber has three silver circles embossed in the floor, and a doorway in the far wall. The wall to the left has many cracks in it, and the air smells a little fresher here. All four walls feature frescoes depicting a starry night over forbiddingly mountainous terrain—nothing like this flooded plain.

The Situation: When the PCs start moving across the room, centipedes pour through the cracks in the wall. One round later, they form into a swarm and attack.

Centipede Swarm: hp 31; *Monster Manual* page 238.

Centipede Tactics: The centipedes scurry across the floor, trying to engulf as many PCs as possible. The summoning circles no longer function, but the centipedes still won't cross the line and enter the middle circle.

CHAMBER OF ASCENSION (EL 8)

The uppermost chamber in the ziggurat has become Lucan's final sanctuary. Lucan spends most of his time in this chamber, sitting in the thronelike chair and contemplating his fate. Once, goblinoid priests communed with the spirits of their most powerful departed brethren in this place. Now Lucan plans to utilize one of the sarcophagi when the sun rises.

Other features of the chamber are described below.

Light: *Continual flame* in wall braziers (bright illumination).

Sound: None.

Reaction: None.

Important Rules: Energy Drain and Negative Levels, *Dungeon Master's Guide* page 293.

When the PCs reach the doorway, read:

Unlike in the other chambers inside the ziggurat, flames from copper braziers mounted halfway up the walls provide light in this area. A high, vaulted ceiling stretches 30 feet up from the floor, providing enough room for a 25-foot-tall statue of a bat-winged, ram-headed demon from an ancient age. Between the statue's feet is a throne-like chair of black marble. Lucan sits upon the throne, staring at you through half-lidded eyes. A series of low stone sarcophagi stands between you and the statue.

The Situation: Lucan attacks immediately, of course, leaping atop a sarcophagus to get a +1 bonus for higher ground. He vents all his rage at his situation on the PCs, making him a terrible opponent indeed.

Lucan: hp 42; see Appendix.

Lucan's Tactics: See the appendix for a detailed discussion of Lucan's tactics. Lucan has temporarily seized control of the *soul blade*, but he would rather not wield it, keeping it sheathed and using his slam attack instead. The *soul blade* can still act, however, and starts using its *confusion* ability if Lucan is reduced below 20 hit points.

In this encounter, Lucan's preferred means of escape is the secret door behind the statue. It leads to the vertical shaft that drops to the crypt. He can hide in a sarcophagus there.

CONCLUSION

When Lucan is captured or defeated, the adventure ends. If there's a wooden stake in his chest, Lucan is completely inert and won't pose problems on the return trip. Viorr pays with no complaints, although he'd like to "debrief" the PCs first.

If it meets the needs of your overall campaign, you can of course make the PCs' lives more difficult. Perhaps one of the PCs tries to use the *soul blade*. You might have some "A Guy Kicks in the Door" encounters left. Or, the Emerald Claw can hound the characters on the way back to Sharn.

Viorr and Neya might turn up in future adventures as patrons, allies, or enemies, and Garrow, Scimitar, and even Lucan could return.

Finally, *Whispers of the Vampire's Blade* plants some seeds for future adventures. How will Calderus react to the capture or destruction of Lucan? Are there unexplored parts of the ziggurat beyond the collapsed hallway? What about the plot involving the schemas? It's your campaign—do with these seeds what you will.

Appendix

The following characters might appear in more than one encounter, so they're presented here for easy reference.

Garrow

A priest of the Blood of Vol in service to the Order of the Emerald Claw, Garrow is a changeling who never appears to the PCs in the same guise twice. His fascination with vampires led him to take that form when he encountered them in *Shadows of the Last War.* This time, he pretends to be the half-elf privateer Rarwog, though he might appear in different guises as you see fit.

Garrow: Male changeling cleric 6; CR 6; Medium humanoid (shapechanger); HD 6d8; hp 32; Init +5; Spd 30 ft.; AC 18, touch 11, flat-footed 14; Base Atk +4; Grp +4; Atk or Full Atk +5 melee (1d4/19–20, masterwork dagger) or +6 ranged (1d4/19–20, masterwork dagger) or +5 ranged (1d8/19–20, light crossbow); SA death touch, rebuke undead; SQ changeling traits, minor change shape; AL LE; AP 3; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +8; Str 10, Dex 13, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 16, Cha 14.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +4, Concentration +5, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +4 (+14 when using minor change shape), Hide +3, Knowledge (religion) +4, Sense Motive +4, Spellcraft +8; Heroic Spirit, Improved Initiative, Spell Focus (necromancy).

Languages: Common, Elven, Goblin.

Changeling Traits: Changelings have a +2 racial bonus on saving throws against sleep and charm effects.

Cleric Spells Prepared (5/5/5/4): 0—*cure minor wounds* (2), *detect magic, guidance, resistance*; 1st—*cure light wounds* (2), *obscuring mist, protection from good, ray of enfeeblement**; 2nd—*command undead** (DC 17), *cure moderate wounds, hold person* (DC 15), *inflict moderate wounds* (DC 17), *silence*; 3rd— *animate dead**, *bestow curse* (DC 18), *dispel magic, prayer.*

*Domain spell. *Domains:* Death (death touch once per day, damage 5d6), Necromancer (cast necromancy spells at +1 caster level).

Possessions: +2 glamered breastplate, masterwork dagger (holy symbol), light crossbow with 10 bolts, *potion of invisibility, potion of cure moderate wounds.*

Areyndee

This elf, an agent in House Thuranni's Shadow Network, has worked with and against Lucan in the past, and now she wants to uncover the secrets surrounding recent events for the benefit of her house.

Areyndee: Female elf rogue 6; CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 6d6; hp 25; Init +3; Spd 30 ft.; AC 16, touch 13, flat-footed 16; Base Atk +4; Grp +4; Atk or Full Atk +8 melee (1d6+1/18–20, *+1 rapier*) or +7 ranged (1d4/19–20, hand crossbow); SA sneak attack +3d6; SQ elf traits, evasion, trap sense +2, trapfinding, uncanny dodge; AL CG; SV Fort +2, Ref +8, Will +4; Str 10, Dex 16, Con 10, Int 15, Wis 14, Cha 15.

Skills and Feats: Bluff +9, Climb +4, Craft (sculpture) +9, Decipher Script +6, Diplomacy +6, Disable Device +9, Disguise +10 (+12 to act in character), Escape Artist +6, Gather Information +8, Hide +8, Listen +6, Move Silently +9, Open Lock +8, Search +7, Sense Motive +7, Spot +6; Dodge, Stealthy, Weapon Finesse.

Languages: Common, Dwarven, Elven, Gnome.

Possessions: Masterwork studded leather armor, *+1 rapier,* hand crossbow with 20 bolts, *medallion of thoughts, potion of cure moderate wounds,* traveling papers (three sets, two false), identification papers (three sets, two false).

Grilsha Stellos

Grilsha is Lucan's sister. Despite his new existence as a vampire, Grilsha loves her brother and stays loyal to him throughout the adventure. She believes that together they can triumph over his condition and the vampire lord who wants to control him. (She doesn't know that the *soul blade* also exerts control over Lucan.)

Grilsha: Female human sorcerer 6; CR 6; Medium humanoid; HD 6d4+6 plus 3; hp 27; Init +2; Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (20 with *mage armor* and *shield*), touch 12, flat-footed 10 (18 with *mage armor* and *shield*); Base Atk +3; Grp +2; Atk or Full Atk +2 melee (1d4–1/19–20, dagger) or +6 ranged (1d4+1 plus 1d6 fire, masterwork hand crossbow with *+1 flaming bolt*) or +6 ranged (1d4, masterwork hand crossbow with normal bolt); SA —; SQ —; AL CN; SV Fort +3, Ref +4, Will +5; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 12, Wis 10, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Concentration +7, Diplomacy +6, Handle Animal +6, Knowledge (arcana) +7, Ride +5, Spellcraft +7; Combat Casting, Dodge, Exotic Weapon Proficiency (hand crossbow), Toughness.

Languages: Common, Draconic.

Sorcerer Spells Known (6/7/6/4): 0—*acid splash, dancing lights, detect magic, detect poison, ray of frost, mage hand, message*; 1st—*disguise self, mage armor, magic missile, shield*; 2nd—*cat's grace, invisibility*; 3rd—*fly.*

Possessions: Dagger, masterwork hand crossbow with 5 *+1 flaming bolts,* 10 normal bolts, *wand of darkness* (13 charges), *wand of magic missile* (14 charges), scroll of *fireball,* scroll of *dimension door,* scroll of *haste,* scroll of *lightning bolt,* 2 scrolls of *phantom steed,* scroll of *scrying,* pearl earrings worth 100 gp, identification papers, 200 gp.

Lucan Stellos

Lucan Stellos, once a trusted and respected member of the Citadel of Breland, has become a vampire. While on a mission for Calderus, his vampire lord, Lucan stole the *soul blade.* This powerful magic weapon exerted its own influence over Lucan, sending the newly created vampire on a trek to reach Karrnath, according to instructions built into the blade when it was crafted during the Last War. Until Lucan breaks free of the influence in Part Five, he does everything in his power to reach Karrnath.

Lucan: Male human vampire rogue 6; CR 8; Medium undead (augmented humanoid); HD 6d12; hp 42; Init +9; Spd 40 ft.; AC 25, touch 15, flat-footed 25; Base Atk +4; Grp +9; Atk or Full Atk +11 melee (1d8+7/17–20, *soul blade*) or +9 melee (1d6+5 plus energy drain, slam); SA blood drain, children of the night, create spawn, dominate, energy drain, sneak attack +3d6; SQ alternate form, damage reduction 10/silver and magic, evasion, fast healing 5, gaseous form, resistance to cold 10 and electricity 10, spider climb, trap sense +2, trapfinding, turn resistance +4, uncanny dodge;

AL CE; SV Fort +2, Ref +11, Will +3; Str 20, Dex 20, Con –, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 16.

Skills and Feats: Balance +7, Bluff +20, Climb +14, Diplomacy +7, Disguise +13 (+15 to act in character), Hide +22, Intimidate +5, Jump +25, Listen +20, Move Silently +22, Search +19, Sense Motive +18, Spot +20, Tumble +16; Alertness[B], Combat Expertise, Combat Reflexes[B], Dodge[B], Improved Feint, Improved Initiative[B], Lightning Reflexes[B], Mobility, Spring Attack.

Languages: Common, Gnome, Elven, Dwarven.

Possessions: +1 studded leather armor, soul blade (see page 6), *boots of striding and springing, glove of storing,* traveling papers, identification papers.

Lucan's Tactics

Despite the *soul blade* that's controlling him, Lucan is a cagey foe. Before an encounter with Lucan begins, think of two escape plans Lucan can use to get out of the fight if it doesn't go his way. Even if he has the PCs on the ropes, Lucan probably breaks off combat (perhaps after feeding from a helpless PC) rather than finish off the PCs because he is compelled to get to Karrnath without delay.

He might use his gaseous form ability, then slither through a floor grate. Lucan could turn into a dire bat (fly speed 40 feet) or dire wolf (speed 50 feet) to run away. He can scurry up the walls effortlessly with his spider climb ability. Or he could simply rely on his *boots of striding and springing,* his Mobility feat, and his high Tumble and Jump modifiers to get out of harm's way.

The PCs face Lucan at three different points in the adventure. You want to make him an NPC the players love to hate—they should get progressively more frustrated and angry with Lucan with each subsequent encounter. Lucan should taunt and belittle the PCs, counter every move they make, and use every dirty, villainous trick to keep himself and the *soul blade* safe.

In the ziggurat, however, it's a different story. Lucan has won a temporary victory in his contest of wills against the *soul blade,* so he's making the ziggurat his last stand. He will neither give nor expect quarter from the PCs. The urbane, taunting Lucan becomes all business—and his business is death.

Lucan has such a wide array of abilities that you shouldn't try to use them all in the first encounter. Lucan is a more interesting villain if he uses a different set of tactics each time. Read the vampire description in the *Monster Manual* and study Lucan's statistics block.

In every round, you want Lucan to be doing something unusual and clever. Here are some particularly effective tactics Lucan might employ.

Sneak Attack: An extra 3d6 points of damage never hurts, but it's hard for Lucan to make sneak attacks when he doesn't have allies to give him a flanking bonus. He always sneak attacks in the first round, often by making a spring attack against a PC who hasn't acted yet.

Spring Attack: Using this feat means Lucan can move, make a melee attack, then move again, moving a total of 40 feet during the round. He doesn't provoke attacks of opportunity from the foe he attacks, and everyone else who makes an attack of opportunity must hit AC 29 due to Lucan's Mobility feat.

Always Move: Lucan can't make more than one attack per round, so he might as well move every round.

Fight in Three Dimensions: Lucan can automatically climb on walls and ceilings at a speed of 20 feet, easily make an 8-foot high jump, turn gaseous to fly at a speed of 20 feet, or transform himself into a bat or dire bat to fly even faster. There's no reason not to get that +1 attack bonus for higher ground—and to confound PCs by going where they can't follow.

Separate and Dominate: If Lucan can spread the party out through movement—or by luring an eager PC forward before the rest of the party is ready—he should attempt to dominate that PC and thereby gain an ally.

Separate and Drain: If Lucan can lure a spellcaster—especially a wizard or sorcerer—away from the rest of the party, Lucan can start a grapple and use his blood drain ability, gaining a lot of temporary hit points and possibly creating a new vampire.

Don't Forget the Soul Blade: The *soul blade* takes actions during each of Lucan's turns. Usually it drops a *confusion* effect (15-ft. radius, Will DC 16) on the biggest cluster of enemies it can see within 120 feet (the limit of its sight). It can also use *faerie fire* if it thinks invisible PCs are nearby, and it always tells Lucan when there's a character with 3 hit points or less within 30 feet. The *soul blade* can also cast *cure moderate wounds,* but it won't do so in combat because *cure* spells damage undead.

Help from Grilsha: Grilsha is a potent sorcerer, and she can cast *cat's grace, invisibility,* and *fly* on Lucan. She has a trick that helps Lucan with his new vampiric nature: If Lucan is caught in direct sunlight, Grilsha uses her *wand of darkness* to keep him from disintegrating under the sun's rays.

Weaknesses: Just as you play to Lucan's strengths, so too should you be aware of Lucan's weaknesses. Lucan doesn't have a good ranged attack, and he doesn't have a good Will save, which is why the *soul blade* controls him so easily. His 42 hit points are far fewer than most creatures of his Challenge Rating; fast healing and damage reduction help offset this weakness, but they don't eliminate it; make sure Lucan flees before he gets to the point where one or two hits from the PCs will defeat him.

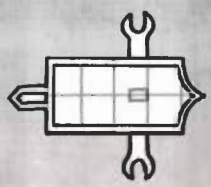
The retreat can be a temporary one, because fast healing 5 brings Lucan back to full strength in less than a minute. Lucan can also use energy drain and blood drain to get temporary hit points, either from the PCs, from minions, or from animals he summons with his children of the night ability.

Lucan's vampiric nature gives him additional weaknesses. Lucan can't attack a PC wielding a mirror or a holy symbol. Natural sunlight destroys Lucan in 1 round, and spells such as *searing light* do extra damage. Like all undead, Lucan is vulnerable to positive energy and turning attempts from PC clerics.

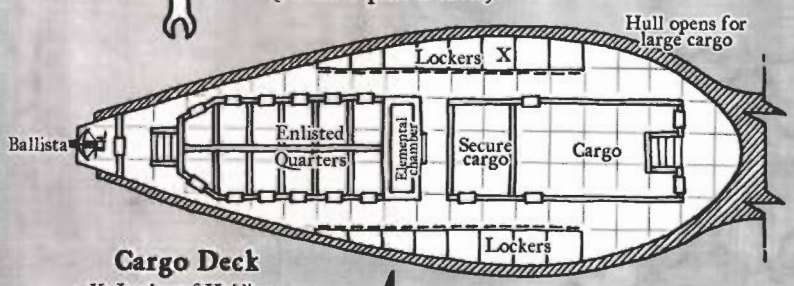
Finally, the *soul blade* itself is something of a weakness, because Lucan attacks with it rather than with his slam attack. The slam attack is probably more effective despite its lower attack bonus, because negative levels degrade the PCs' power so quickly. Only in the ziggurat fight at the end of the adventure does Lucan forego the *soul blade* for his slam attack.

Cloud's Destiny Airship

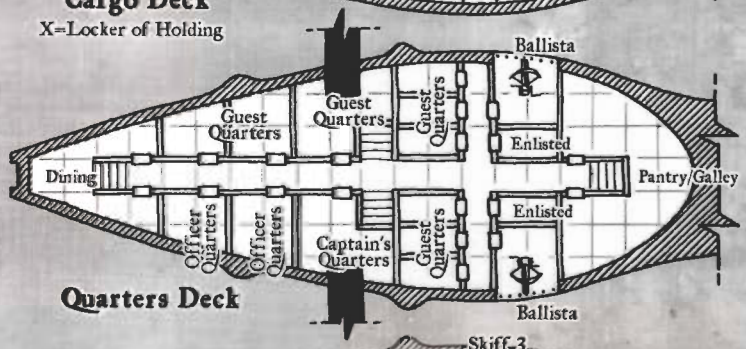
One square equals 5 feet



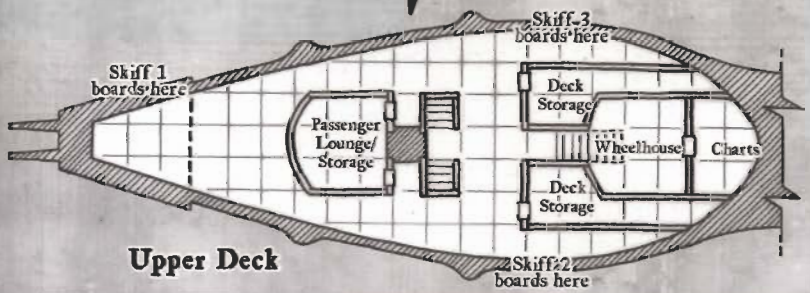
Skiff
(Holds 6 plus 2 crew)



Cargo Deck
X=Locker of Holding



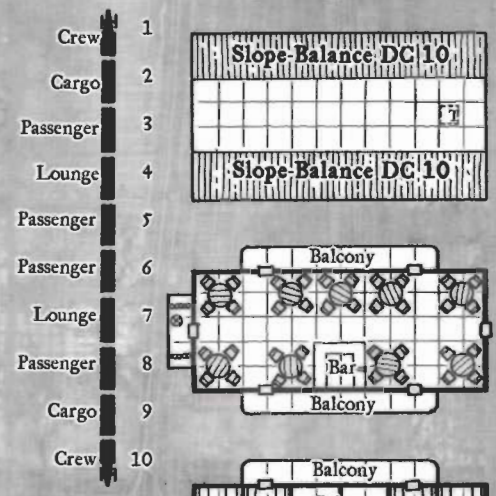
Quarters Deck

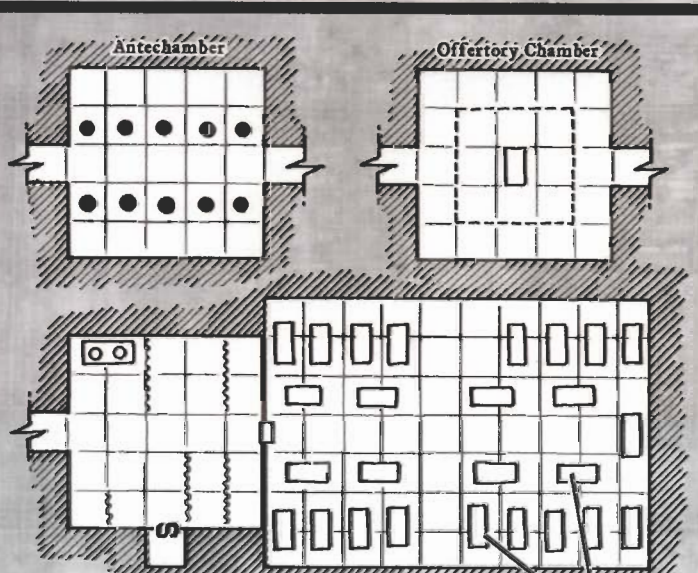


Upper Deck

Lightning Rail Coach

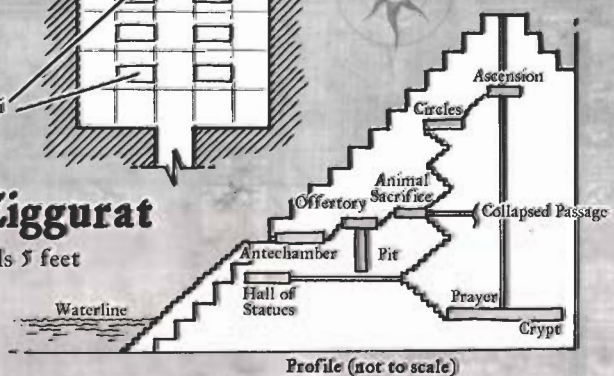
One square equals 5 feet





Ancient Ziggurat

One square equals 5 feet



Profile (not to scale)

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